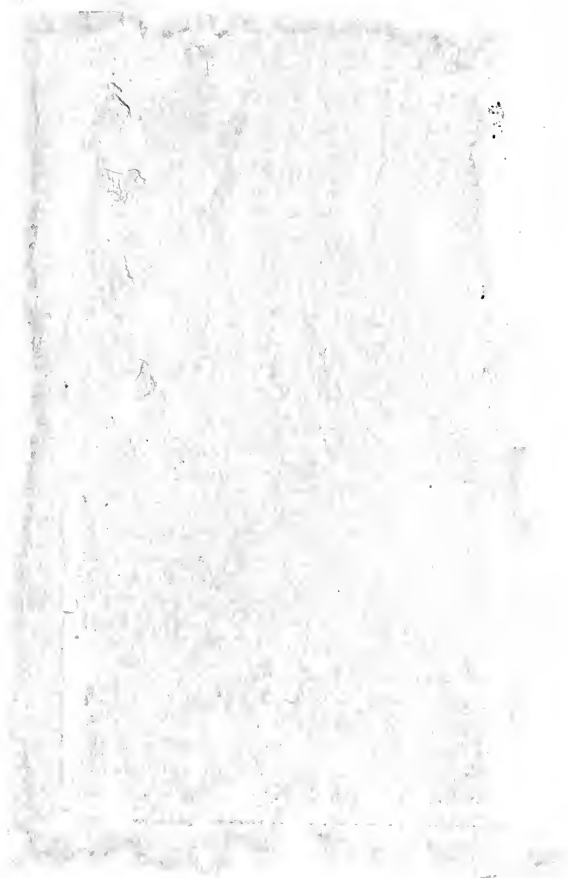


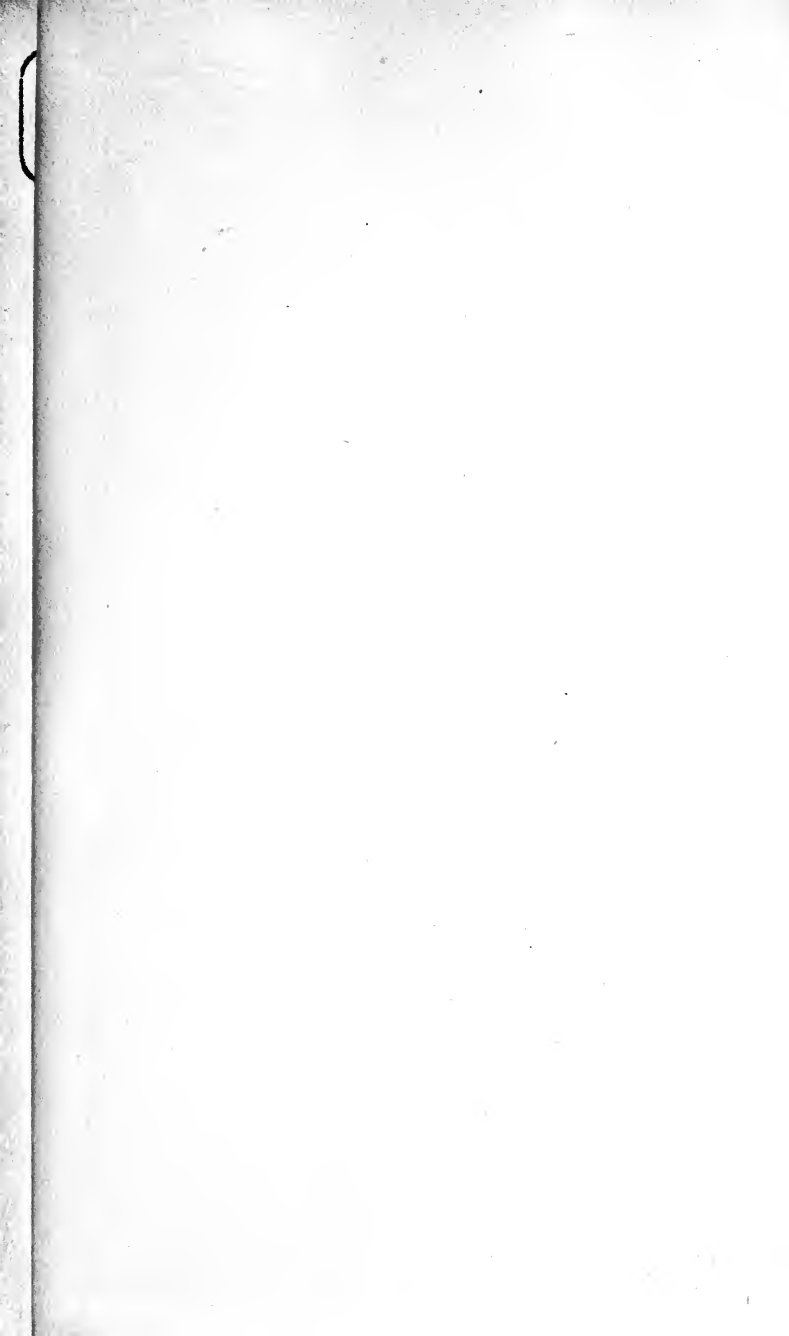


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# POEMS

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BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY  
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE PILOT'S STORY . . . . .	3
FORLORN . . . . .	13
PLEASURE-PAIN . . . . .	19
IN AUGUST . . . . .	26
THE EMPTY HOUSE . . . . .	27
BUBBLES . . . . .	29
LOST BELIEFS . . . . .	31
LOUIS LEBEAU'S CONVERSION . . . . .	32
CAPRICE . . . . .	49
SWEET CLOVER . . . . .	51
THE ROYAL PORTRAITS . . . . .	54
THE FAITHFUL OF THE GONZAGA . . . . .	59
THE FIRST CRICKET . . . . .	77
THE MULBERRIES . . . . .	79
BEFORE THE GATE . . . . .	84
CLEMENT . . . . .	86
BY THE SEA . . . . .	97
SAINT CHRISTOPHER . . . . .	98
ELEGY ON JOHN BUTLER HOWELLS . . . . .	100
THANKSGIVING . . . . .	105
A SPRINGTIME . . . . .	106
IN EARLIEST SPRING . . . . .	108

THE BOBOLINKS ARE SINGING . . . . .	110
PRELUDE . . . . .	113
THE MOVERS . . . . .	115
THROUGH THE MEADOW . . . . .	120
GONE . . . . .	122
THE SARCASTIC FAIR . . . . .	123
RAPTURE . . . . .	124
DEAD . . . . .	125
THE DOUBT . . . . .	127
THE THORN . . . . .	129
THE MYSTERIES . . . . .	130
THE BATTLE IN THE CLOUDS . . . . .	131
FOR ONE OF THE KILLED . . . . .	133
THE TWO WIVES . . . . .	134
BEREAVED . . . . .	136
THE SNOW-BIRDS . . . . .	138
VAGARY . . . . .	139
FEUERBILDER . . . . .	141
AVERY . . . . .	143
BOPEEP: A PASTORAL . . . . .	148
WHILE SHE SANG . . . . .	160
A POET . . . . .	163
CONVENTION . . . . .	164
THE POET'S FRIENDS . . . . .	165
NO LOVE LOST . . . . .	166
THE SONG THE ORIOLE SINGS . . . . .	199
PORDENONE . . . . .	201
THE LONG DAYS . . . . .	223

## THE PILOT'S STORY.

### I.

IT was a story the pilot told, with his back to  
his hearers, —

Keeping his hand on the wheel and his eye on the  
globe of the jack-staff,

Holding the boat to the shore and out of the  
sweep of the current,

Lightly turning aside for the heavy logs of the  
drift-wood,

Widely shunning the snags that made us sardonic  
obeisance.

### II.

All the soft, damp air was full of delicate per-  
fume

From the young willows in bloom on either bank  
of the river, —

Faint, delicious fragrance, trancing the indolent  
senses

In a luxurious dream of the river and land of the  
lotus.

Not yet out of the west the roses of sunset were  
withered ;  
In the deep blue above light clouds of gold and  
of crimson  
Floated in slumber serene ; and the restless river  
beneath them  
Rushed away to the sea with a vision of rest in  
its bosom ;  
Far on the eastern shore lay dimly the swamps of  
the cypress ;  
Dimly before us the islands grew from the river's  
expanses, —  
Beautiful, wood-grown isles, with the gleam of the  
swart inundation  
Seen through the swaying boughs and slender  
trunks of their willows ;  
And on the shore beside us the cotton-trees rose  
in the evening,  
Phantom-like, yearningly, wearily, with the in-  
scrutable sadness  
Of the mute races of trees. While hoarsely the  
steam from her 'scape-pipes  
Shouted, then whispered a moment, then shouted  
again to the silence,  
Trembling through all her frame with the mighty  
pulse of her engines,  
Slowly the boat ascended the swollen and broad  
Mississippi,

Bank-full, sweeping on, with tangled masses of  
drift-wood,  
Daintily breathed about with whiffs of silvery va-  
por,  
Where in his arrowy flight the twittering swallow  
alighted,  
And the belated blackbird paused on the way to  
its nestlings.

## III.

It was the pilot's story : — “ They both came  
aboard there, at Cairo,  
From a New Orleans boat, and took passage with  
us for Saint Louis.  
She was a beautiful woman, with just enough  
blood from her mother  
Darkening her eyes and her hair to make her  
race known to a trader :  
You would have thought she was white. The  
man that was with her, — you see such, —  
Weakly good-natured and kind, and weakly good-  
natured and vicious,  
Slender of body and soul, fit neither for loving  
nor hating.  
I was a youngster then, and only learning the  
river, —  
Not over-fond of the wheel. I used to watch them  
at monte,

Down in the cabin at night, and learned to know  
all of the gamblers.

So when I saw this weak one staking his money  
against them,

Betting upon the turn of the cards, I knew what  
was coming :

*They* never left their pigeons a single feather to  
fly with.

Next day I saw them together, — the stranger and  
one of the gamblers :

Picturesque rascal he was, with long black hair  
and moustaches,

Black slouch hat drawn down to his eyes from his  
villanous forehead.

On together they moved, still earnestly talking in  
whispers,

On toward the forecastle, where sat the woman  
alone by the gangway.

Roused by the fall of feet, she turned, and, be-  
holding her master,

Greeted him with a smile that was more like a  
wife's than another's,

Rose to meet him fondly, and then, with the  
dread apprehension

Always haunting the slave, fell her eye on the  
face of the gambler, —

Dark and lustful and fierce and full of merciless  
cunning.

Something was spoken so low that I could not  
hear what the words were ;  
Only the woman started, and looked from one to  
the other,  
With imploring eyes, bewildered hands, and a  
tremor  
All through her frame : I saw her from where I  
was standing, she shook so.  
'Say ! is it so ?' she cried. On the weak, white  
lips of her master  
Died a sickly smile, and he said, 'Louise, I have  
sold you.'  
God is my judge ! May I never see such a look  
of despairing,  
Desolate anguish, as that which the woman cast  
on her master,  
Gripping her breast with her little hands, as if he  
had stabbed her,  
Standing in silence a space, as fixed as the Indian  
woman  
Carved out of wood, on the pilot-house of the old  
Pocahontas !  
Then, with a gurgling moan, like the sound in the  
throat of the dying,  
Came back her voice, that, rising, fluttered,  
through wild incoherence,  
Into a terrible shriek that stopped my heart while  
she answered : —

'Sold me? sold me? sold — And you promised  
to give me my freedom! —

Promised me, for the sake of our little boy in  
Saint Louis!

What will you say to our boy, when he cries for  
me there in Saint Louis?

What will you say to our God? — Ah, you have  
been joking! I see it! —

No? God! God! He shall hear it, — and all of  
the angels in heaven, —

Even the devils in hell! — and none will believe  
when they hear it!

Sold me!' — Her voice died away with a wail,  
and in silence

Down she sank on the deck, and covered her face  
with her fingers."

#### IV.

In his story a moment the pilot paused, while we  
listened

To the salute of a boat, that, rounding the point  
of an island,

Flamed toward us with fires that seemed to burn  
from the waters, —

Stately and vast and swift, and borne on the heart  
of the current.

Then, with the mighty voice of a giant challenged  
to battle,



Rose the responsive whistle, and all the echoes of  
island,  
Swamp-land, glade, and brake replied with a  
myriad clamor,  
Like wild birds that are suddenly startled from  
slumber at midnight,  
Then were at peace once more ; and we heard the  
harsh cries of the peacocks  
Perched on a tree by a cabin-door, where the  
white-headed settler's  
White-headed children stood to look at the boat  
as it passed them,  
Passed them so near that we heard their happy  
talk and their laughter.  
Softly the sunset had faded, and now on the  
eastern horizon  
Hung, like a tear in the sky, the beautiful star of  
the evening.

## v.

Still with his back to us standing, the pilot went  
on with his story : —  
“All of us flocked round the woman. The chil-  
dren cried, and their mothers  
Hugged them tight to their breasts ; but the  
gambler said to the captain, —  
‘Put me off there at the town that lies round the  
bend of the river.

Here, you ! rise at once, and be ready now to go  
with me.'

Roughly he seized the woman's arm and strove to  
uplift her.

She — she seemed not to heed him, but rose like  
one that is dreaming,

Slid from his grasp, and fleetly mounted the steps  
of the gangway,

Up to the hurricane-deck, in silence, without lam-  
entation.

Straight to the stern of the boat, where the wheel  
was, she ran, and the people

Followed her fast till she turned and stood at bay  
for a moment,

Looking them in the face, and in the face of the  
gambler.

Not one to save her, — not one of all the compas-  
sionate people !

Not one to save her, of all the pitying angels in  
heaven !

Not one bolt of God to strike him dead there  
before her !

Wildly she waved him back, we waiting in silence  
and horror.

Over the swarthy face of the gambler a pallor of  
passion

Passed, like a gleam of lightning over the west in  
the night-time.

White, she stood, and mute, till he put forth his  
hand to secure her ;  
Then she turned and leaped, — in mid-air flut-  
tered a moment, —  
Down then, whirling, fell, like a broken-winged  
bird from a tree-top,  
Down on the cruel wheel, that caught her, and  
hurled her, and crushed her,  
And in the foaming water plunged her, and hid  
her forever.”

## VI.

Still with his back to us all the pilot stood, but  
we heard him  
Swallowing hard, as he pulled the bell-rope for  
stopping. Then, turning, —  
“This is the place where it happened,” brokenly  
whispered the pilot.  
“Somehow, I never like to go by here alone in  
the night-time.”  
Darkly the Mississippi flowed by the town that lay  
in the starlight,  
Cheerful with lamps. Below we could hear them  
reversing the engines,  
And the great boat glided up to the shore like a  
giant exhausted.  
Heavily sighed her pipes. Broad over the swamps  
to the eastward

Shone the full moon, and turned our far-trembling  
wake into silver.

All was serene and calm, but the odorous breath  
of the willows

Smote with a mystical sense of infinite sorrow  
upon us.

FORLORN.

I.

RED roses, in the slender vases burning,  
Breathed all upon the air, —  
The passion and the tenderness and yearning,  
The waiting and the doubting and despair.

II.

Still with the music of her voice was haunted,  
Through all its charmed rhymes,  
The open book of such a one as chanted  
The things he dreamed in old, old summer-times.

III.

The silvern chords of the piano trembled  
Still with the music wrung  
From them ; the silence of the room dissembled  
The closes of the songs that she had sung.

IV.

The languor of the crimson shawl's abasement, —  
Lying without a stir

Upon the floor, — the absence at the casement,  
The solitude and hush were full of her.

## V.

Without, and going from the room, and never  
Departing, did depart  
Her steps ; and one that came too late forever  
Felt them go heavy o'er his broken heart.

## VI.

And, sitting in the house's desolation,  
He could not bear the gloom,  
The vanishing encounter and evasion  
Of things that were and were not in the room.

## VII.

Through midnight streets he followed fleeting  
visions  
Of faces and of forms ;  
He heard old tendernesses and derisions  
Amid the sobs and cries of midnight storms.

## VIII.

By midnight lamps, and from the darkness under  
That lamps made at their feet,  
He saw sweet eyes peer out in innocent wonder,  
And sadly follow after him down the street.

## IX.

The noonday crowds their restlessness obtruded  
Between him and his quest ;  
At unseen corners jostled and eluded,  
Against his hand her silken robes were pressed.

## X.

Doors closed upon her ; out of garret casements  
He knew she looked at him ;  
In splendid mansions and in squalid basements,  
Upon the walls he saw her shadow swim.

## XI.

From rapid carriages she gleamed upon him,  
Whirling away from sight ;  
From all the hopelessness of search she won him  
Back to the dull and lonesome house at night.

## XII.

Full early into dark the twilights saddened  
Within its closed doors ;  
The echoes, with the clock's monotony maddened,  
Leaped loud in welcome from the hollow floors ;

## XIII.

But gusts that blew all day with solemn laughter  
From wide-mouthed chimney-places,

And the strange noises between roof and rafter,  
The wainscot clamor, and the scampering races

## XIV.

Of mice that chased each other through the  
chambers,  
And up and down the stair,  
And rioted among the ashen embers,  
And left their frolic footprints everywhere, —

## XV.

Were hushed to hear his heavy tread ascending  
The broad steps, one by one,  
And toward the solitary chamber tending,  
Where the dim phantom of his hope alone

## XVI.

Rose up to meet him, with his growing nearer,  
Eager for his embrace,  
And moved, and melted into the white mirror,  
And stared at him with his own haggard face.

## XVII.

But, turning, he was 'ware *her* looks beheld him  
Out of the mirror white ;  
And at the window yearning arms she held him,  
Out of the vague and sombre fold of night.



## XVIII.

Sometimes she stood behind him, looking over  
His shoulder as he read ;  
Sometimes he felt her shadowy presence hover  
Above his dreamful sleep, beside his bed ;

## XIX.

And rising from his sleep, her shadowy presence  
Followed his light descent  
Of the long stair ; her shadowy evanescence  
Through all the whispering rooms before him  
went.

## XX.

Upon the earthy draught of cellars blowing  
His shivering lamp-flame blue,  
Amid the damp and chill, he felt her flowing  
Around him from the doors he entered through.

## XXI.

The spiders wove their webs upon the ceiling ;  
The bat clung to the wall ;  
The dry leaves through the open transom stealing,  
Skated and danced adown the empty hall.

## XXII.

About him closed the utter desolation,  
About him closed the gloom ;

The vanishing encounter and evasion  
Of things that were and were not in the room

## XXIII.

Vexed him forever ; and his life forever  
Immured and desolate,  
Beating itself, with desperate endeavor,  
But bruised itself, against the round of fate.

## XXIV.

The roses, in their slender vases burning,  
Were quenched long before ;  
A dust was on the rhymes of love and yearning ;  
The shawl was like a shroud upon the floor.

## XXV.

Her music from the thrilling chords had perished ;  
The stillness was not moved  
With memories of cadences long cherished,  
The closes of the songs that she had loved.

## XXVI.

But not the less he felt her presence never  
Out of the room depart ;  
Over the threshold, not the less, forever  
He felt her going on his broken heart.

PLEASURE-PAIN.

“Das Vergnügen ist Nichts als ein höchst angenehmer Schmerz.”—HEINRICH HEINE.

I.

FULL of beautiful blossoms  
Stood the tree in early May :  
Came a chilly gale from the sunset,  
And blew the blossoms away ;

Scattered them through the garden,  
Tossed them into the mere :  
The sad tree moaned and shuddered,  
“Alas ! the Fall is here.”

But all through the glowing summer  
The blossomless tree thrived fair,  
And the fruit waxed ripe and mellow,  
With sunny rain and air ;

And when the dim October  
With golden death was crowned,  
Under its heavy branches  
The tree stooped to the ground.

In youth there comes a west-wind  
Blowing our bloom away, —  
A chilly breath of Autumn  
Out of the lips of May.

We bear the ripe fruit after, —  
Ah, me ! for the thought of pain ! —  
We know the sweetness and beauty  
And the heart-bloom never again.

## II.

One sails away to sea,  
One stands on the shore and cries ;  
The ship goes down the world, and the light  
On the sullen water dies.

The whispering shell is mute,  
And after is evil cheer :  
She shall stand on the shore and cry in vain,  
Many and many a year.

But the stately, wide-winged ship  
Lies wrecked on the unknown deep ;  
Far under, dead in his coral bed,  
The lover lies asleep.

III.

Through the silent streets of the city,  
In the night's unbusy noon,  
Up and down in the pallor  
Of the languid summer moon,

I wander, and think of the village,  
And the house in the maple-gloom,  
And the porch with the honeysuckles  
And the sweet-brier all abloom.

My soul is sick with the fragrance  
Of the dewy sweet-brier's breath :  
O darling ! the house is empty,  
And lonesomer than death !

If I call, no one will answer ;  
If I knock, no one will come :  
The feet are at rest forever,  
And the lips are cold and dumb.

The summer moon is shining  
So wan and large and still,  
And the weary dead are sleeping  
In the graveyard under the hill.

## IV.

We looked at the wide, white circle  
Around the Autumn moon,  
And talked of the change of weather :  
It would rain, to-morrow, or soon.

And the rain came on the morrow,  
And beat the dying leaves  
From the shuddering boughs of the maples  
Into the flooded eaves.

The clouds wept out their sorrow ;  
But in my heart the tears  
Are bitter for want of weeping,  
In all these Autumn years.

## V.

The bobolink sings in the meadow,  
The wren in the cherry-tree :  
Come hither, thou little maiden,  
And sit upon my knee ;

And I will tell thee a story  
I read in a book of rhyme ;  
I will but fain that it happened  
To me, one summer-time,

When we walked through the meadow,  
And she and I were young.  
The story is old and weary  
With being said and sung.

The story is old and weary :  
Ah, child ! it is known to thee.  
Who was it that last night kissed thee  
Under the cherry-tree ?

## VI.

Like a bird of evil presage,  
To the lonely house on the shore  
Came the wind with a tale of shipwreck,  
And shrieked at the bolted door,

And flapped its wings in the gables,  
And shouted the well-known names,  
And buffeted the windows  
Afeard in their shuddering frames.

It was night, and it is morning, —  
The summer sun is bland,  
The white-cap waves come rocking, rocking,  
In to the summer land.

The white-cap waves come rocking, rocking,  
In the sun so soft and bright,

And toss and play with the dead man  
Drowned in the storm last night.

## VII.

I remember the burning brushwood,  
Glimmering all day long  
Yellow and weak in the sunlight,  
Now leaped up red and strong,

And fired the old dead chestnut,  
That all our years had stood,  
Gaunt and gray and ghostly,  
Apart from the sombre wood ;

And, flushed with sudden summer,  
The leafless boughs on high  
Blossomed in dreadful beauty  
Against the darkened sky.

We children sat telling stories,  
And boasting what we should be,  
When we were men like our fathers,  
And watched the blazing tree,

That showered its fiery blossoms,  
Like a rain of stars, we said,  
Of crimson and azure and purple.  
That night, when I lay in bed,



I could not sleep for seeing,  
Whenever I closed my eyes,  
The tree in its dazzling splendor  
Against the darkened skies.

I cannot sleep for seeing,  
With closed eyes to-night,  
The tree in its dazzling splendor  
Dropping its blossoms bright ;

And old, old dreams of childhood  
Come thronging my weary brain,  
Dear, foolish beliefs and longings :  
I doubt, are they real again ?

It is nothing, and nothing, and nothing,  
That I either think or see :  
The phantoms of dead illusions  
To-night are haunting me.

## IN AUGUST.

ALL the long August afternoon,  
The little drowsy stream  
Whispers a melancholy tune,  
As if it dreamed of June  
And whispered in its dream.

The thistles show beyond the brook  
Dust on their down and bloom,  
And out of many a weed-grown nook  
The aster-flowers look  
With eyes of tender gloom.

The silent orchard aisles are sweet  
With smell of ripening fruit.  
Through the sere grass, in shy retreat,  
Flutter, at coming feet,  
The robins strange and mute.

There is no wind to stir the leaves,  
The harsh leaves overhead ;  
Only the querulous cricket grieves,  
And shrilling locust weaves  
A song of Summer dead.

THE EMPTY HOUSE.

THE wet trees hang above the walks  
Purple with damps and earthish stains,  
And strewn by moody, absent rains  
With rose-leaves from the wild-grown stalks.

Unmown, in heavy, tangled swaths,  
The ripe June-grass is wanton blown ;  
Snails slime the untrodden threshold-stone ;  
Along the sills hang drowsy moths.

Down the blank visage of the wall,  
Where many a wavering trace appears,  
Like a forgotten trace of tears,  
From swollen eaves the slow drops crawl.

Where everything was wide before,  
The curious wind, that comes and goes,  
Finds all the latticed windows close,  
Secret and close the bolted door.

And with the shrewd and curious wind,  
That in the archéd doorway cries,

And at the bolted portal tries,  
And harks and listens at the blind, —

Forever lurks my thought about,  
And in the ghostly middle-night  
Finds all the hidden windows bright,  
And sees the guests go in and out,

And lingers till the pallid dawn,  
And feels the mystery deeper there  
In silent, gust-swept chambers, bare,  
With all the midnight revel gone ;

But wanders through the lonesome rooms,  
Where harsh the astonished cricket calls,  
And, from the hollows of the walls  
Vanishing, start unshapen glooms ;

And lingers yet, and cannot come  
Out of the drear and desolate place,  
So full of ruin's solemn grace,  
And haunted with the ghost of home.

## BUBBLES.

## I.

I STOOD on the brink in childhood,  
And watched the bubbles go  
From the rock-fretted, sunny ripple  
To the smoother tide below ;

And over the white creek-bottom,  
Under them every one,  
Went golden stars in the water,  
All luminous with the sun.

But the bubbles broke on the surface,  
And under, the stars of gold  
Broke ; and the hurrying water  
Flowed onward, swift and cold.

## II.

I stood on the brink in manhood,  
And it came to my weary brain,  
And my heart, so dull and heavy  
After the years of pain, —

That every hollowest bubble  
Which over my life had passed  
Still into its deeper current  
Some heavenly gleam had cast ;

That, however I mocked it gayly,  
And guessed at its hollowness,  
Still shone, with each bursting bubble,  
One star in my soul the less.

LOST BELIEFS.

ONE after one they left us ;  
The sweet birds out of our breasts  
Went flying away in the morning :  
Will they come again to their nests ?

Will they come again at nightfall,  
With God's breath in their song ?  
Noon is fierce with the heats of summer,  
And summer days are long !

O my Life, with thy upward liftings,  
Thy downward-striking roots,  
Ripening out of thy tender blossoms  
But hard and bitter fruits ! —

In thy boughs there is no shelter  
For the birds to seek again.  
The desolate nest is broken  
And torn with storms and rain !

## LOUIS LEBEAU'S CONVERSION.

YESTERDAY, while I moved with the languid crowd on the Riva,  
Musing with idle eyes on the wide lagoons and the islands,  
And on the dim-seen seaward glimmering sails in the distance,  
Where the azure haze, like a vision of Indian-Summer,  
Haunted the dreamy sky of the soft Venetian December, —  
While I moved unwilling in the mellow warmth of the weather,  
Breathing air that was full of Old World sadness and beauty  
Into my thought came this story of free, wild life in Ohio,  
When the land was new, and yet by the Beautiful River  
Dwelt the pioneers and Indian hunters and boatmen.



Pealed from the campanili, responding from  
island to island,  
Bells of that ancient faith whose incense and solemn  
devotions  
Rise from a hundred shrines in the broken heart  
of the city ;  
But in my revery heard I only the passionate  
voices  
Of the people that sang in the virgin heart of the  
forest.  
Autumn was in the land, and the trees were golden  
and crimson,  
And from the luminous boughs of the over-elms  
and the maples  
Tender and beautiful fell the light in the worship-  
pers' faces,  
Softer than lights that stream through the saints  
on the windows of churches,  
While the balsamy breath of the hemlocks and  
pines by the river  
Stole on the winds through the woodland aisles  
like the breath of a censer.  
Loud the people sang old camp-meeting anthems  
that quaver  
Quaintly yet from lips forgetful of lips that have  
kissed them ;

Loud they sang the songs of the Sacrifice and  
Atonement,  
And of the end of the world, and the infinite ter-  
rors of Judgment : —  
Songs of ineffable sorrow, and wailing, compassion-  
ate warning  
Unto the generations that hardened their hearts to  
their Savior ;  
Songs of exultant rapture for them that confessed  
him and followed,  
Bearing his burden and yoke, enduring and en-  
tering with him  
Into the rest of his saints, and the endless reward  
of the blessed.  
Loud the people sang ; but through the sound of  
their singing  
Broke inarticulate cries and moans and sobs from  
the mourners,  
As the glory of God, that smote the apostle of  
Tarsus,  
Smote them and strewed them to earth like leaves  
in the breath of the whirlwind.

Hushed at last was the sound of the lamenta-  
tion and singing ;  
But from the distant hill the throbbing drum of  
the pheasant

Shook with its heavy pulses the depths of the  
listening silence,  
When from his place arose a white-haired exhorter,  
and faltered :  
“ Brethren and sisters in Jesus ! the Lord hath  
heard our petitions,  
So that the hearts of his servants are awed and  
melted within them, —  
Even the hearts of the wicked are touched by his  
infinite mercy.  
All my days in this vale of tears the Lord hath  
been with me,  
He hath been good to me, he hath granted me  
trials and patience ;  
But this hour hath crowned my knowledge of  
him and his goodness.  
Truly, but that it is well this day for me to be  
with you,  
Now might I say to the Lord, — ‘ I know thee,  
my God, in all fulness ;  
Now let thy servant depart in peace to the rest  
thou hast promised ! ’ ”

Faltered and ceased. And now the wild and  
jubilant music  
Of the singing burst from the solemn profound of  
the silence,

Surged in triumph, and fell, and ebbd again into  
silence.

Then from the group of the preachers arose the  
greatest among them, —  
He whose days were given in youth to the praise  
of the Savior,  
He whose lips seemed touched, like the prophet's  
of old, from the altar,  
So that his words were flame, and burned to the  
hearts of his hearers,  
Quickening the dead among them, reviving the  
cold and the doubting.  
There he charged them pray, and rest not from  
prayer while a sinner  
In the sound of their voices denied the Friend of  
the sinner :  
“ Pray till the night shall fall, — till the stars are  
faint in the morning, —  
Yea, till the sun himself be faint in that glory and  
brightness,  
Faint in the light which shall dawn in mercy for  
penitent sinners.”  
Kneeling, he led them in prayer ; and the quick  
and sobbing responses  
Spake how their souls were moved with the might  
and the grace of the Spirit.

Then while the converts recounted how God had  
    chastened and saved them, —  
Children, whose golden locks yet shone with the  
    lingering effulgence  
Of the touches of Him who blessed little children  
    forever ;  
Old men, whose yearning eyes were dimmed with  
    the far-streaming brightness  
Seen through the opening gates in the heart of  
    the heavenly city, —  
Stealthily through the harking woods the lengthen-  
    ing shadows  
Chased the wild things to their nests, and the  
    twilight died into darkness.

Now the four great pyres that were placed  
    there to light the encampment,  
High on platforms raised above the people, were  
    kindled.  
Flaming aloof, as it were the pillar by night in the  
    Desert  
Fell their crimson light on the lifted orbs of the  
    preachers,  
Fell on the withered brows of the old men, and  
    Israel's mothers,  
Fell on the bloom of youth, and the earnest devo-  
    tion of manhood,

Fell on the anguish and hope in the tearful eyes  
of the mourners.  
Flaming aloof, it stirred the sleep of the luminous  
maples  
With warm summer-dreams, and faint, luxurious  
languor.  
Near the four great pyres the people closed in a  
circle,  
In their midst the mourners, and, praying with  
them, the exhorters,  
And on the skirts of the circle the unrepentant  
and scorners, —  
Ever fewer and sadder, and drawn to the place of  
the mourners,  
One after one, by the prayers and tears of the  
brethren and sisters,  
And by the Spirit of God, that was mightily striv-  
ing within them,  
Till at the last alone stood Louis Lebeau, uncon-  
verted.

Louis Lebeau, the boatman, the trapper, the  
hunter, the fighter,  
From the unlucky French of Gallipolis he de-  
scended,  
Heir to Old World want and New World love of  
adventure.

Vague was the life he led, and vague and grotesque were the rumors  
Through which he loomed on the people, — the  
hero of mythical hearsay,  
Quick of hand and of heart, impatient, generous,  
Western,  
Taking the thought of the young in secret love  
and in envy.  
Not less the elders shook their heads and held  
him for outcast,  
Reprobate, roving, ungodly, infidel, worse than a  
Papist,  
With his whispered fame of lawless exploits at St.  
Louis,  
Wild affrays and loves with the half-breeds out on  
the Osage,  
Brawls at New Orleans, and all the towns on the  
rivers,  
All the godless towns of the many-ruffianed  
rivers.  
Only she who loved him the best of all, in her  
loving  
Knew him the best of all, and other than that of  
the rumors.  
Daily she prayed for him, with conscious and tender  
effusion,  
That the Lord would convert him. But when her  
father forbade him

Unto her thought, she denied him, and likewise  
held him for outcast,  
Turned her eyes when they met, and would not  
speak, though her heart broke.

Bitter and brief his logic that reasoned from  
wrong unto error :  
“This is their praying and singing,” he said,  
“that makes you reject me, —  
You that were kind to me once. But I think my  
fathers’ religion,  
With a light heart in the breast and a friendly  
priest to absolve one,  
Better than all these conversions that only be-  
wilder and vex me,  
And that have made men so hard and women  
fickle and cruel.  
Well, then, pray for my soul, since you would not  
have spoken to save me, —  
Yes ; for I go from these saints to my brethren  
and sisters, the sinners.”  
Spoke and went, while her faint lips fashioned  
unuttered entreaties, —  
Went, and came again in a year at the time of  
the meeting,  
Haggard and wan of face, and wasted with passion  
and sorrow.



Dead in his eyes was the careless smile of old,  
and its phantom  
Haunted his lips in a sneer of restless, incredulous  
mocking.  
Day by day he came to the outer skirts of the  
circle,  
Dwelling on her, where she knelt by the white-  
haired exhorter, her father,  
With his hollow looks, and never moved from his  
silence.

Now, where he stood alone, the last of impeni-  
tent sinners,  
Weeping, old friends and comrades came to him  
out of the circle,  
And with their tears besought him to hear what  
the Lord had done for them.  
Ever he shook them off, not roughly, nor smiled  
at their transports.  
Then the preachers spoke and painted the terrors  
of Judgment,  
And of the bottomless pit, and the flames of hell  
everlasting.  
Still and dark he stood, and neither listened nor  
heeded ;  
But when the fervent voice of the white-haired  
exhorter was lifted,

Fell his brows in a scowl of fierce and scornful rejection.

“Lord, let this soul be saved!” cried the fervent voice of the old man ;

“For that the Shepherd rejoiceth more truly for one that hath wandered,

And hath been found again, than for all the others that strayed not.”

Out of the midst of the people, a woman old and decrepit,

Tremulous through the light, and tremulous into the shadow,

Wavered toward him with slow, uncertain paces of palsy,

Laid her quivering hand on his arm and brokenly prayed him :

“Louis Lebeau, I closed in death the eyes of your mother.

On my breast she died, in prayer for her fatherless children,

That they might know the Lord, and follow him always, and serve him.

O, I conjure you, my son, by the name of your mother in glory,

Scorn not the grace of the Lord!” As when a summer-noon's tempest

Breaks in one swift gush of rain, then ceases and  
gathers  
Darker and gloomier yet on the lowering front of  
the heavens,  
So broke his mood in tears, as he soothed her, and  
stilled her entreaties,  
And so he turned again with his clouded looks to  
the people.

Vibrated then from the hush the accents of  
mournfullest pity, —  
His who was gifted in speech, and the glow of the  
fires illumined  
All his pallid aspect with sudden and marvellous  
splendor :  
“Louis Lebeau,” he spake, “I have known you  
and loved you from childhood ;  
Still, when the others blamed you, I took your  
part, for I knew you.  
Louis Lebeau, my brother, I thought to meet you  
in heaven,  
Hand in hand with her who is gone to heaven  
before us,  
Brothers through her dear love ! I trusted to  
greet you and lead you  
Up from the brink of the River unto the gates of  
the City.

Lo ! my years shall be few on the earth. O my  
brother,  
If I should die before you had known the mercy  
of Jesus,  
Yea, I think it would sadden the hope of glory  
within me ! ”

Neither yet had the will of the sinner yielded  
an answer ;  
But from his lips there broke a cry of unspeakable  
anguish,  
Wild and fierce and shrill, as if some demon within  
him  
Rent his soul with the ultimate pangs of fiendish  
possession ;  
And with the outstretched arms of bewildered  
imploring toward them,  
Death-white unto the people he turned his face  
from the darkness.

Out of the sedge by the creek a flight of clam-  
orous kildees  
Rose from their timorous sleep with piercing and  
iterant challenge,  
Wheeled in the starlight, and fled away into dis-  
tance and silence.  
White in the vale lay the tents, and beyond them  
glided the river,

Where the broadhorn \* drifted slow at the will of  
the current,  
And where the boatman listened, and knew not  
how, as he listened,  
Something touched through the years the old lost  
hopes of his childhood, —  
Only his sense was filled with low, monotonous  
murmurs,  
As of a faint-heard prayer, that was chorused with  
deeper responses.

Not with the rest was lifted her voice in the  
fervent responses,  
But in her soul she prayed to Him that heareth  
in secret,  
Asking for light and for strength to learn his will  
and to do it :  
“ O, make me clear to know if the hope that rises  
within me  
Be not part of a love unmeet for me here, and  
forbidden !  
So, if it be not that, make me strong for the evil  
entreaty  
Of the days that shall bring me question of self  
and reproaches,

\* The old-fashioned flatboats were so called.

When the unrighteous shall mock, and my brethren  
    and sisters shall doubt me !  
Make me worthy to know thy will, my Savior,  
    and do it !”  
In her pain she prayed, and at last, through her  
    mute adoration,  
Rapt from all mortal presence, and in her rapture  
    uplifted,  
Glorified she rose, and stood in the midst of the  
    people,  
Looking on all with the still, unseeing eyes of  
    devotion, —  
Vague, and tender, and sweet, as the eyes of the  
    dead, when we dream them  
Living and looking on us, but they cannot speak,  
    and we cannot, —  
Knowing only the peril that threatened his soul's  
    unrepentance,  
Knowing only the fear and error and wrong that  
    withheld him,  
Thinking, “ In doubt of me, his soul had perished  
    forever !”  
Touched with no feeble shame, but trusting her  
    power to save him,  
Through the circle she passed, and straight to the  
    side of her lover,  
Took his hand in her own, and mutely implored  
    him an instant,

Answering, giving, forgiving, confessing, beseech-  
ing him all things ;  
Drew him then with her, and passed once more  
through the circle  
Unto her place, and knelt with him there by the  
side of her father,  
Trembling as women tremble who greatly venture  
and triumph, —  
But in her innocent breast was the saint's sub-  
lime exultation.

So was Louis converted ; and though the lips  
of the scorers  
Spared not in after years the subtle taunt and  
derision  
(What time, meeker grown, his heart held his  
hand from its answer),  
Not the less lofty and pure her love and her faith  
that had saved him,  
Not the less now discerned was her inspiration  
from heaven  
By the people, that rose, and embracing and  
weeping together,  
Poured forth their jubilant songs of victory and  
of thanksgiving,  
Till from the embers leaped the dying flame to  
behold them,

And the hills of the river were filled with reverberant echoes, —

Echoes that out of the years and the distance stole to me hither,

While I moved unwilling in the mellow warmth of the weather ;

Echoes that mingled and fainted and fell with the fluttering murmurs

In the hearts of the hushing bells, as from island to island

Swooned the sound on the wide lagoons into palpitant silence.



## CAPRICE.

## I.

SHE hung the cage at the window :  
“ If he goes by,” she said,  
“ He will hear my robin singing,  
And when he lifts his head,  
I shall be sitting here to sew,  
And he will bow to me, I know.”

The robin sang a love-sweet song,  
The young man raised his head ;  
The maiden turned away and blushed :  
“ I am a fool !” she said,  
And went on broidering in silk  
A pink-eyed rabbit, white as milk.

## II.

The young man loitered slowly  
By the house three times that day ;  
She took her bird from the window :  
“ He need not look this way.”  
She sat at her piano long,  
And sighed, and played a death-sad song.

But when the day was done, she said,  
    " I wish that he would come !  
Remember, Mary, if he calls  
    To-night — I 'm not at home."  
So when he rang, she went — the elf! —  
She went and let him in herself.

## III.

They sang full long together  
    Their songs love-sweet, death-sad ;  
The robin woke from his slumber,  
    And rang out, clear and glad.  
" Now go ! " she coldly said ; "'t is late ;"  
And followed him — to latch the gate.

He took the rosebud from her hair,  
    While, " You shall not ! " she said ;  
He closed her hand within his own,  
    And, while her tongue forbade,  
Her will was darkened in the eclipse  
Of blinding love upon his lips.

SWEET CLOVER.

.... My letters back to me."

I.

I KNOW they won the faint perfume,  
That to their faded pages clings,  
From gloves, and handkerchiefs, and things  
Kept in the soft and scented gloom

Of some mysterious box — poor leaves  
Of summer, now as sere and dead  
As any leaves of summer shed  
From crimson boughs when autumn grieves !

The ghost of fragrance ! Yet I thrill  
All through with such delicious pain  
Of soul and sense, to breathe again  
The sweet that haunted memory still.

And under these December skies,  
As bland as May's in other climes,  
I move, and muse my idle rhymes  
And subtly sentimentalize.

I hear the music that was played, —  
The songs that silence knows by heart ! —  
I see sweet burlesque feigning art,  
The careless grace that curved and swayed

Through dances and through breezy walks ;  
I feel once more the eyes that smiled,  
And that dear presence that beguiled  
The pauses of the foolish talks,

When this poor phantom of perfume  
Was the Sweet Clover's living soul,  
And breathed from her as if it stole,  
Ah, heaven ! from her heart in bloom !

## II.

We have not many ways with pain :  
We weep weak tears, or else we laugh ;  
I doubt, not less the cup we quaff,  
And tears and scorn alike are vain.

But let me live my quiet life ;  
I will not vex my calm with grief,  
I only know the pang was brief,  
And there an end of hope and strife.

And thou? I put the letters by :  
In years the sweetness shall not pass ;  
More than the perfect blossom was  
I count its lingering memory.

Alas ! with Time dear Love is dead,  
And not with Fate. And who can guess  
How weary of our happiness  
We might have been if we were wed ?

Venice,

## THE ROYAL PORTRAITS.

(AT LUDWIGSHOF.)

## I.

CONFRONTING each other the pictures stare  
Into each other's sleepless eyes ;  
And the daylight into the darkness dies,  
From year to year in the palace there :  
But they watch and guard that no device  
Take either one of them unaware.

Their majesties the king and the queen,  
The parents of the reigning prince :  
Both put off royalty many years since,  
With life and the gifts that have always been  
Given to kings from God, to evince  
His sense of the mighty over the mean.

I cannot say that I like the face  
Of the king ; it is something fat and red ;  
And the neck that lifts the royal head  
Is thick and coarse ; and a scanty grace  
Dwells in the dull blue eyes that are laid  
Sullenly on the queen in her place.

He must have been a king in his day  
'T were well to pleasure in work and sport :  
One of the heaven-anointed sort  
Who ruled his people with iron sway,  
And knew that, through good and evil report,  
God meant him to rule and them to obey.

There are many other likenesses  
Of the king in his royal palace there ;  
You find him depicted everywhere, —  
In his robes of state, in his hunting-dress,  
In his flowing wig, in his powdered hair, —  
A king in all of them, none the less ;

But most himself in this on the wall  
Over against his consort, whose  
Laces, and hoops, and high-heeled shoes  
Make her the finest lady of all  
The queens or courtly dames you choose,  
In the ancestral portrait hall.

A glorious blonde : a luxury  
Of luring blue and wanton gold,  
Of blanchéd rose and crimson bold,  
Of lines that flow voluptuously  
In tender, languorous curves to fold  
Her form in perfect symmetry.

She might have been false. Of her withered dust  
There scarcely would be enough to write  
Her guilt in now ; and the dead have a right  
To our lenient doubt if not to our trust :  
So if the truth cannot make her white,  
Let us be as merciful as we — must.

## II.

The queen died first, the queen died young,  
But the king was very old when he died,  
Rotten with license, and lust, and pride ;  
And the usual Virtues came and hung  
Their cypress wreaths on his tomb, and wide  
Throughout his kingdom his praise was sung.

How the queen died is not certainly known,  
And faithful subjects are all forbid  
To speak of the murder which some one did  
One night while she slept in the dark alone :  
History keeps the story hid,  
And Fear only tells it in undertone.

Up from your startled feet aloof,  
In the famous Echo-Room, with a bound  
Leaps the echo, and round and round  
Beating itself against the roof, —  
A horrible, gasping, shuddering sound, —  
Dies ere its terror can utter proof



Of that it knows. A door is fast,  
And none is suffered to enter there.  
His sacred majesty could not bear  
To look at it toward the last,  
As he grew very old. It opened where  
The queen died young so many years past.

## III.

How the queen died is not certainly known ;  
But in the palace's solitude  
A harking dread and horror brood,  
And a silence, as if a mortal groan  
Had been hushed the moment before, and would  
Break forth again when you were gone.

The present king has never dwelt  
In the desolate palace. From year to year  
In the wide and stately garden drear  
The snows and the snowy blossoms melt  
Unheeded, and a ghastly fear  
Through all the shivering leaves is felt.

By night the gathering shadows creep  
Along the dusk and hollow halls,  
And the slumber-broken palace calls  
With stifled moans from its nightmare sleep ;  
And then the ghostly moonlight falls  
Athwart the darkness brown and deep.

At early dawn the light wind sighs,  
And through the desert garden blows  
The wasted sweetness of the rose ;  
At noon the feverish sunshine lies  
Sick in the walks. But at evening's close,  
When the last, long rays to the windows rise,

And with many a blood-red, wrathful streak  
Pierce through the twilight glooms that blur  
His cruel vigilance and her  
Regard, they light fierce looks that wreak  
A hopeless hate that cannot stir,  
A voiceless hate that cannot speak

In the awful calm of the sleepless eyes ;  
And as if she saw her murderer glare  
On her face, and he the white despair  
Of his victim kindle in wild surmise,  
Confronted the conscious pictures stare, —  
And their secret back into darkness dies.

THE FAITHFUL OF THE GONZAGA.\*

I.

FEDERIGO, the son of the Marquis,  
Downcast, through the garden goes :  
He is hurt with the grace of the lily,  
And the beauty of the rose.

For what is the grace of the lily  
But her own slender grace ?  
And what is the rose's beauty  
But the beauty of her face ? —

Who sits beside her window  
Waiting to welcome him,

\* The author of this ballad has added a thread of evident love-story to a most romantic incident of the history of Mantua, which occurred in the fifteenth century. He relates the incident so nearly as he found it in the *Cronache Montovane*, that he is ashamed to say how little his invention has been employed in it. The hero of the story, Federigo, became the third Marquis of Mantua, and was a prince greatly beloved and honored by his subjects.

That comes so lothly toward her  
With his visage sick and dim.

“ Ah ! lily, I come to break thee !  
Ah ! rose, a bitter rain  
Of tears shall beat thy light out  
That thou never burn again ! ”

## II.

Federigo, the son of the Marquis,  
Takes the lady by the hand :  
“ Thou must bid me God-speed on a journey,  
For I leave my native land.

“ From Mantua to-morrow  
I go, a banished man ;  
Make me glad for truth and love's sake  
Of my father's curse and ban.

“ Our quarrel has left my mother  
Like death upon the floor ;  
And I come from a furious presence  
I never shall enter more.

“ I would not wed the woman  
He had chosen for my bride,  
For my heart had been before him,  
With his statecraft and his pride.

“ I swore to him by my princehood  
In my love I would be free ;  
And I swear to thee by my manhood,  
I love no one but thee.

“ Let the Duke of Bavaria marry  
His daughter to whom he will :  
There where my love was given  
My word shall be faithful still.

“ There are six true hearts will follow  
My truth wherever I go,  
And thou equal truth wilt keep me  
In welfare and in woe.”

The maiden answered him nothing  
Of herself, but his words again  
Came back through her lips like an echo  
From an abyss of pain ;

And vacantly repeating  
“ In welfare and in woe,”  
Like a dream from the heart of fever  
From her arms she felt him go.

III.

Out of Mantua's gate at daybreak  
Seven comrades wander forth

On a path that leads at their humor,  
East, west, or south, or north.

The prince's laugh rings lightly,  
    " What road shall we take from home ?"  
And they answer, " We never shall lose it  
    If we take the road to Rome."

And with many a jest and banter  
    The comrades keep their way,  
Journeying out of the twilight  
    Forward into the day,

When they are aware beside them  
    Goes a pretty minstrel lad,  
With a shy and downward aspect,  
    That is neither sad nor glad.

Over his slender shoulder,  
    His mandolin was slung,  
And around its chords the treasure  
    Of his golden tresses hung.

Spoke one of the seven companions,  
    " Little minstrel, whither away ?" —  
" With seven true-hearted comrades  
    On their journey, if I may."

Spoke one of the seven companions,

“ If our way be hard and long ? ” —

“ I will lighten it with my music  
And shorten it with my song.”

Spoke one of the seven companions,

“ But what are the songs thou know’st ? ” —

“ O, I know many a ditty,  
But this I sing the most :

“ How once was an humble maiden

Beloved of a great lord’s son,

That for her sake and his troth’s sake

Was banished and undone.

“ And forth of his father’s city

He went at break of day,

And the maiden softly followed

Behind him on the way

“ In the figure of a minstrel,

And prayed him of his love,

‘ Let me go with thee and serve thee

Wherever thou may’st rove.

“ ‘ For if thou goest in exile

I rest banishèd at home,

And where thou wanderest with thee  
My fears in anguish roam,

“ ‘Besetting thy path with perils,  
Making thee hungry and cold,  
Filling thy heart with trouble  
And heaviness untold.

“ ‘But let me go beside thee,  
And banishment shall be  
Honor, and riches, and country,  
And home to thee and me !’ ”

Down falls the minstrel-maiden  
Before the Marquis' son,  
And the six true-hearted comrades  
Bow round them every one.

Federigo, the son of the Marquis,  
From its scabbard draws his sword :  
“ Now swear by the honor and fealty  
Ye bear your friend and lord,

“ That whenever, and wherever,  
As long as ye have life,  
Ye will honor and serve this lady  
As ye would your prince's wife ! ”



IV.

Over the broad expanses  
Of garlanded Lombardy,  
Where the gentle vines are swinging  
In the orchards from tree to tree ;

Through Padua from Verona,  
From the sculptured gothic town,  
Carved from ruin upon ruin,  
And ancienter than renown ;

Through Padua from Verona  
To fair Venice, where she stands  
With her feet on subject waters,  
Lady of many lands ;

From Venice by sea to Ancona ;  
From Ancona to the west ;  
Climbing many a gardened hillside  
And many a castled crest ;

Through valleys dim with the twilight  
Of their gray olive trees ;  
Over plains that swim with harvests  
Like golden noonday seas ;

Whence the lofty campanili  
Like the masts of ships arise,

And like a fleet at anchor  
Under them, the village lies ;

To Florence beside her Arno,  
In her many-marbled pride,  
Crowned with infamy and glory  
By the sons she has denied ;

To pitiless Pisa, where never  
Since the anguish of Ugolin  
The moon in the Tower of Famine †  
Fate so dread as his hath seen ;

Out through the gates of Pisa  
To Livorno on her bay,  
To Genoa and to Naples  
The comrades hold their way,

Past the Guelph in his town beleaguered,  
Past the fortified Ghibelline,  
Through lands that reek with slaughter,  
Treason, and shame, and sin ;

† “ Breve pertugio dentro dalla Muda,  
La qual per me ha il titol della fame  
E in che conviene ancor ch'altri si chiuda,  
M'avea mostrato per lo suo forame  
Piu lune gia.” DANTE, *L'Inferno*.

By desert, by sea, by city,  
High hill-cope and temple-dome,  
Through pestilence, hunger, and horror,  
Upon the road to Rome ;

While every land behind them  
Forgets them as they go,  
And in Mantua they are remembered  
As is the last year's snow ;

But the Marchioness goes to her chamber  
Day after day to weep, —  
For the changeless heart of a mother  
The love of a son must keep.

The Marchioness weeps in her chamber  
Over tidings that come to her  
Of the exiles she seeks, by letter  
And by lips of messenger,

Broken hints of their sojourn and absence,  
Comfortless, vague, and slight, —  
Like feathers wafted backwards  
From passage birds in flight. ‡

‡ “ As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in its flight.”

The tale of a drunken sailor,  
In whose ship they went to sea ;  
A traveller's evening story  
At a village hostelry,

Of certain comrades sent him  
By our Lady, of her grace,  
To save his life from robbers  
In a lonely desert place ;

Word from the monks of a convent  
Of gentle comrades that lay  
One stormy night at their convent,  
And passed with the storm at day ;

The long parley of a peasant  
That sold them wine and food,  
The gossip of a shepherd  
That guided them through a wood ;

A boatman's talk at the ferry  
Of a river where they crossed,  
And as if they had sunk in the current  
All trace of them was lost ;

And so is an end of tidings  
But never an end of tears,

Of secret and friendless sorrow  
Through blank and silent years.

v.

To the Marchioness in her chamber  
Sends word a messenger,  
Newly come from the land of Naples,  
Praying for speech with her.

The messenger stands before her,  
A minstrel slender and wan :  
“ In a village of my country  
Lies a Mantuan gentleman,

“ Sick of a smouldering fever,  
Of sorrow and poverty ;  
And no one in all that country  
Knows his title or degree.

“ But six true Mantuan peasants,  
Or nobles, as some men say,  
Watch by the sick man’s bedside,  
And toil for him, night and day,

“ Hewing, digging, reaping, sowing,  
Bearing burdens, and far and nigh  
Begging for him on the highway  
Of the strangers that pass by ;

“ And they look whenever you meet them  
Like broken-hearted men,  
And I heard that the sick man would not  
If he could, be well again ;

“ For they say that he for love’s sake  
Was gladly banishèd,  
But she for whom he was banished  
Is worse to him, now, than dead, —

“ A recreant to his sorrow,  
A traitress to his woe.”  
From her place the Marchioness rises,  
The minstrel turns to go.

But fast by the hand she takes him, —  
His hand in her clasp is cold, —  
“ If gold may be thy guerdon  
Thou shalt not lack for gold ;

“ And if the love of a mother  
Can bless thee for that thou hast done,  
Thou shalt stay and be his brother,  
Thou shalt stay and be my son.”

“ Nay, my lady,” answered the minstrel,  
And his face is deadly pale,

“Nay, this must not be, sweet lady,  
But let my words prevail.

“Let me go now from your presence,  
And I will come again,  
When you stand with your son beside you,  
And be your servant then.”

VI.

At the feet of the Marquis Gonzaga  
Kneels his lady on the floor ;  
“Lord, grant me before I ask it  
The thing that I implore.”

“So it be not of that ingrate.” —  
“Nay, lord, it is of him.”

’Neath the stormy brows of the Marquis  
His eyes are tender and dim.

“He lies sick of a fever in Naples,  
Near unto death, as they tell,  
In his need and pain forsaken  
By the wanton he loved so well.

“Now send for him and forgive him,  
If ever thou loved’st me,  
Now send for him and forgive him  
As God shall be good to thee.”

“ Well so, — if he turn in repentance  
And bow himself to my will ;  
That the high-born lady I chose him  
May be my daughter still.”

## VII.

In Mantua there is feasting  
For the Marquis' grace to his son ;  
In Mantua there is rejoicing  
For the prince come back to his own.

The pomp of a wedding procession  
Pauses under the pillared porch,  
With silken rustle and whisper,  
Before the door of the church.

In the midst, Federigo the bridegroom  
Stands with his high-born bride ;  
The six true-hearted comrades  
Are three on either side.

The bridegroom is gray as his father,  
Where they stand face to face,  
And the six true-hearted comrades  
Are like old men in their place.

The Marquis takes the comrades  
And kisses them one by one :



“That ye were fast and faithful  
And better than I to my son,

“Ye shall be called forever,  
In the sign that ye were so true,  
The Faithful of the Gonzaga,  
And your sons after you.”

VIII.

To the Marchioness comes a courtier :  
“I am prayed to bring you word  
That the minstrel keeps his promise  
Who brought you news of my lord ;

“And he waits without the circle  
To kiss your highness’ hand ;  
And he asks no gold for guerdon,  
But before he leaves the land

“He craves of your love once proffered  
That you suffer him for reward,  
In this crowning hour of his glory,  
To look on your son, my lord.”

Through the silken press of the courtiers  
The minstrel faltered in.  
His clasped hands were bloodless,  
His face was white and thin ;

And he bent his knee to the lady,  
But of her love and grace  
To her heart she raised him and kissed him  
Upon his gentle face.

Turned to her son the bridegroom,  
Turned to his high-born wife,  
“I give you here for your brother  
Who gave back my son to life.

“For this youth brought me news from Naples  
How thou layest sick and poor,  
By true comrades kept, and forsaken  
By a false paramour.

“Wherefore I charge you love him  
For a brother that is my son.”  
The comrades turned to the bridegroom  
In silence every one.

But the bridegroom looked on the minstrel  
With a visage blank and changed,  
As his whom the sight of a spectre  
From his reason hath estranged ;

And the smiling courtiers near them  
On a sudden were still as death ;

And, subtly-stricken, the people  
Hearkened and held their breath

With an awe uncomprehended  
For an unseen agony : —  
Who is this that lies a-dying,  
With her head on the prince's knee ?

A light of anguish and wonder  
Is in the prince's eye,  
“ O, speak, sweet saint, and forgive me,  
Or I cannot let thee die !

“ For now I see thy hardness  
Was softer than mortal ruth,  
And thy heavenly guile was whiter,  
My saint, than martyr's truth.”

She speaks not and she moves not,  
But a blessed brightness lies  
On her lips in their silent rapture  
And her tender closed eyes.

Federigo, the son of the Marquis,  
He rises from his knee :  
“ Aye, you have been good, my father,  
To them that were good to me.

“ You have given them honors and titles,

But here lies one unknown —

Ah, God reward her in heaven

With the peace he gives his own ! ”

THE FIRST CRICKET.

AH me ! is it then true that the year has waxed  
unto waning,  
And that so soon must remain nothing but lapse  
and decay, —  
Earliest cricket, that out of the midsummer mid-  
night complaining,  
All the faint summer in me takest with subtle  
dismay ?

Though thou bringest no dream of frost to the  
flowers that slumber,  
Though no tree for its leaves, doomed of thy  
voice, maketh moan,  
Yet with th' unconscious earth's boded evil my  
soul thou dost cumber,  
And in the year's lost youth makest me still  
lose my own.

Answerest thou, that when nights of December are  
blackest and bleakest,  
And when the fervid grate feigns me a May in  
my room,

And by my hearthstone gay, as now sad in my  
garden, thou creakest, —

Thou wilt again give me all, — dew and fragrance and bloom ?

Nay, little poet ! full many a cricket I have that  
is willing,

If I but take him down out of his place on my  
shelf,

Me blither lays to sing than the blithest known to  
thy shrilling,

Full of the rapture of life, May, morn, hope, and  
— himself :

Leaving me only the sadder ; for never one of my  
singers

Lures back the bee to his feast, calls back the  
bird to his tree.

Hast thou no art can make me believe, while the  
summer yet lingers,

Better than bloom that has been red leaf and  
sere that must be ?

THE MULBERRIES.

I.

ON the Rialto Bridge we stand ;  
The street ebbs under and makes no sound ;  
But, with bargains shrieked on every hand,  
The noisy market rings around.

*" Mulberries, fine mulberries, here ! "*  
A tuneful voice, — and light, light measure ;  
Though I hardly should count these mulberries  
dear,  
If I paid three times the price for my pleasure.

Brown hands splashed with mulberry blood,  
The basket wreathed with mulberry leaves  
Hiding the berries beneath them ; — good !  
Let us take whatever the young rogue gives.

For you know, old friend, I have n't eaten  
A mulberry since the ignorant joy  
Of anything sweet in the mouth could sweeten  
All this bitter world for a boy.

## II.

O, I mind the tree in the meadow stood

By the road near the hill : when I clomb aloof  
On its branches, this side of the girdled wood,  
I could see the top of our cabin roof.

And, looking westward, could sweep the shores  
Of the river where we used to swim  
Under the ghostly sycamores,  
Haunting the waters smooth and dim ;

And eastward athwart the pasture-lot  
And over the milk-white buckwheat field  
I could see the stately elm, where I shot  
The first black squirrel I ever killed.

And southward over the bottom-land  
I could see the mellow breadths of farm  
From the river-shores to the hills expand,  
Clasped in the curving river's arm.

In the fields we set our guileless snares  
For rabbits and pigeons and wary quails,  
Content with the vaguest feathers and hairs  
From doubtful wings and vanished tails.

And in the blue summer afternoon  
We used to sit in the mulberry-tree :



The breaths of wind that remembered June  
Shook the leaves and glittering berries free ;

And while we watched the wagons go  
Across the river, along the road,  
To the mill above, or the mill below,  
With horses that stooped to the heavy load,

We told old stories and made new plans,  
And felt our hearts gladden within us again,  
For we did not dream that this life of a man's  
Could ever be what we know as men.

We sat so still that the woodpeckers came  
And pillaged the berries overhead ;  
From his log the chipmonk, waxen tame,  
Peered, and listened to what we said.

## III.

One of us long ago was carried  
To his grave on the hill above the tree ;  
One is a farmer there, and married ;  
One has wandered over the sea.

And, if you ask me, I hardly know  
Whether I'd be the dead or the clown, —  
The clod above or the clay below, —  
Or this listless dust by fortune blown

To alien lands. For, however it is,  
So little we keep with us in life :  
At best we win only victories,  
Not peace, not peace, O friend, in this strife.

But if I could turn from the long defeat  
Of the little successes once more, and be  
A boy, with the whole wide world at my feet,  
Under the shade of the mulberry-tree, —

From the shame of the squandered chances, the  
sleep  
Of the will that cannot itself awaken,  
From the promise the future can never keep,  
From the fitful purposes vague and shaken, —

Then, while the grasshopper sang out shrill  
In the grass beneath the blanching thistle,  
And the afternoon air, with a tender thrill,  
Harked to the quail's complaining whistle, —

Ah me ! should I paint the morrows again  
In quite the colors so faint to-day,  
And with the imperial mulberry's stain  
Re-purple life's doublet of hodden-gray ?

Know again the losses of disillusion ?  
For the sake of the hope, have the old deceit ? —

In spite of the question's bitter infusion,  
Don't you find these mulberries over-sweet ?

All our atoms are changed, they say ;  
And the taste is so different since then ;  
We live, but a world has passed away  
With the years that perished to make us men.

## BEFORE THE GATE.

THEY gave the whole long day to idle laughter,  
To fitful song and jest,  
To moods of soberness as idle, after,  
And silences, as idle too as the rest.

But when at last upon their way returning,  
Taciturn, late, and loath,  
Through the broad meadow in the sunset burning,  
They reached the gate, one fine spell hindered  
them both.

Her heart was troubled with a subtile anguish  
Such as but women know  
That wait, and lest love speak or speak not languish,  
And what they would, would rather they would  
not so ;

Till he said, — man-like nothing comprehending  
Of all the wondrous guile  
That women won win themselves with, and bend-  
ing  
Eyes of relentless asking on her the while, —

“ Ah, if beyond this gate the path united  
Our steps as far as death,  
And I might open it ! — ” His voice, affrighted  
At its own daring, faltered under his breath.

Then she — whom both his faith and fear en-  
chanted  
Far beyond words to tell,  
Feeling her woman’s finest wit had wanted  
The art he had that knew to blunder so well —

Shyly drew near, a little step, and mocking,  
“ Shall we not be too late  
For tea ? ” she said. “ I ’m quite worn out with  
walking :  
Yes, thanks, your arm. And will you — open  
the gate ? ”

## CLEMENT.

## I.

THAT time of year, you know, when the summer, beginning to sadden,  
Full-mooned and silver-misted, glides from the heart of September,  
Mourned by disconsolate crickets, and iterant grasshoppers, crying  
All the still nights long, from the ripened abundance of gardens ;  
Then, ere the boughs of the maples are mantled with earliest autumn,  
But the wind of autumn breathes from the orchards at nightfall,  
Full of winy perfume and mystical yearning and languor ;  
And in the noonday woods you hear the foraging squirrels,  
And the long, crashing fall of the half-eaten nut from the tree-top ;  
When the robins are mute, and the yellow-birds, haunting the thistles,  
Cheep, and twitter, and flit through the dusty lanes and the loppings,

When the pheasant booms from your stealthy  
foot in the cornfield,  
And the wild-pigeons feed, few and shy, in the  
scoke-berry bushes ;  
When the weary land lies hushed, like a seer in a  
vision,  
And your life seems but the dream of a dream  
which you cannot remember, —  
Broken, bewildering, vague, an echo that answers  
to nothing !  
That time of year, you know. They stood by the  
gate in the meadow,  
Fronting the sinking sun, and the level stream of  
its splendor  
Crimsoned the meadow-slope and woodland with  
tenderest sunset,  
Made her beautiful face like the luminous face of  
an angel,  
Smote through the pained gloom of his heart like  
a hurt to the sense, there.  
Languidly clung about by the half-fallen shawl,  
and with folded  
Hands, that held a few sad asters : “ I sigh for  
this idyl  
Lived at last to an end ; and, looking on to my  
prose-life,”  
With a smile, she said, and a subtle derision of  
manner,

“Better and better I seem, when I recollect all  
that has happened  
Since I came here in June : the walks we have  
taken together  
Through these darling meadows, and dear, old,  
desolate woodlands ;  
All our afternoon readings, and all our strolls  
through the moonlit  
Village, — so sweetly asleep, one scarcely could  
credit the scandal,  
Heartache, and trouble, and spite, that were hushed  
for the night, in its silence.  
Yes, I am better. I think I could even be civil to  
*him* for his kindness,  
Letting me come here without him . . . . But open  
the gate, Cousin Clement ;  
Seems to me it grows chill, and I think it is  
healthier in-doors.  
— No, then ! you need not speak, for I know well  
enough what is coming :  
Bitter taunts for the past, and discouraging views  
of the future ?  
Tragedy, Cousin Clement, or comedy, — just as  
you like it ; —  
Only not here alone, but somewhere that people  
can see you.  
Then I'll take part in the play, and appear the  
remorseful young person



Full of divine regrets at not having smothered a  
genius

Under the feathers and silks of a foolish, extrava-  
gant woman.

O you selfish boy ! what was it, just now, about  
anguish ?

Bills would be your talk, Cousin Clement, if you  
were my husband."

Then, with her summer-night glory of eyes  
low-bending upon him,

Dark'ning his thoughts as the pondered stars be-  
wilder and darken,

Tenderly, wistfully drooping toward him, she fal-  
tered in whisper, —

All her mocking face transfigured, — with mourn-  
ful effusion :

"Clement, do not think it is you alone that re-  
member, —

Do not think it is you alone that have suffered.  
Ambition,

Fame, and your art, — you have all these things  
to console you.

I — what have I in this world ? Since my child  
is dead — a bereavement."

Sad hung her eyes on his, and he felt all the  
anger within him

Broken, and melting in tears. But he shrank  
from her touch while he answered

(Awkwardly, being a man, and awkwardly, being  
a lover),

“Yes, you know how it is done. You have  
cleverly fooled me beforetime,

With a dainty scorn, and then an imploring for-  
giveness !

Yes, you might play it, I think, — that *rôle* of re-  
morseful young person,

That, or the old man’s darling, or anything else  
you attempted.

Even your earnest is so much like acting I fear a  
betrayal,

Trusting your speech. You say that you have  
not forgotten. I grant you —

Not, indeed, for your word — that is light — but  
I wish to believe you.

Well, I say, since you have not forgotten, forget  
now, forever !

I — I have lived and loved, and you have lived  
and have married.

Only receive this bud to remember me when we  
have parted, —

Thorns and splendor, no sweetness, rose of the  
love that I cherished !”

There he tore from its stalk the imperial flower of  
the thistle,

Tore, and gave to her, who took it with mocking  
obeisance,

Twined it in her hair, and said, with her subtle  
derision :

“ You are a wiser man than I thought you could  
ever be, Clement, —

Sensible, almost. So ! I'll try to forget and  
remember.”

Lightly she took his arm, but on through the lane  
to the farm-house,

Mutely together they moved through the lonesome,  
odorous twilight.

## II.

High on the farm-house hearth, the first autumn  
fire was kindled ;

Scintillant hickory bark and dryest limbs of the  
beech-tree

Burned, where all summer long the boughs of  
asparagus flourished.

Wild were the children with mirth, and grouping  
and clinging together,

Danced with the dancing flame, and lithely swayed  
with its humor ;

Ran to the window-panes, and peering forth into  
the darkness,

Saw there another room, flame-lit, and with frolicking  
children.

(Ah ! by such phantom hearths, I think that we  
sit with our first-loves !)

Sometimes they tossed on the floor, and sometimes  
they hid in the corners,  
Shouting and laughing aloud, and never resting a  
moment,  
In the rude delight, the boisterous gladness of  
childhood, —  
Cruel as summer sun and singing-birds to the  
heartsick.

Clement sat in his chair unmoved in the midst  
of the hubbub,  
Rapt, with unseeing eyes ; and unafraid in their  
gambols,  
By his tawny beard the children caught him, and  
clambered  
Over his knees, and waged a mimic warfare across  
them,  
Made him their battle-ground, and won and lost  
kingdoms upon him.  
Airily to and fro, and out of one room to another  
Passed his cousin, and busied herself with things  
of the household,  
Nonchalant, debonair, blithe, with bewitching  
housewifely importance,  
Laying the cloth for the supper, and bringing the  
meal from the kitchen ;  
Fairer than ever she seemed, and more than ever  
she mocked him,

Coming behind his chair, and clasping her fingers  
together  
Over his eyes in a girlish caprice, and crying,  
“ Who is it ? ”  
Vexed his despair with a vision of wife and of  
home and of children,  
Calling his sister's children around her, and still-  
ing their clamor,  
Making believe they were hers. And Clement sat  
moody and silent,  
Blank to the wistful gaze of his mother bent on  
his visage  
With the tender pain, the pitiful, helpless devo-  
tion  
Of the mother that looks on the face of her son in  
his trouble,  
Grown beyond her consoling, and knows that she  
cannot befriend him.  
Then his cousin laughed, and in idleness talked  
with the children ;  
Sometimes she turned to him, and then when the  
thistle was falling,  
Caught it and twined it again in her hair, and  
called it her keepsake,  
Smiled, and made him ashamed of his petulant  
gift there, before them.  
But, when the night was grown old and the two  
by the hearthstone together

Sat alone in the flickering red of the flame, and  
the cricket

Carked to the stillness, and ever, with sullen  
throbs of the pendule

Sighed the time-worn clock for the death of the  
days that were perished, —

It was her whim to be sad, and she brought him  
the book they were reading.

“Read it to-night,” she said, “that I may not  
seem to be going.”

Said, and mutely reproached him with all the pain  
she had wrought him.

From her hand he took the volume and read, and  
she listened, —

All his voice molten in secret tears, and ebbing  
and flowing,

Now with a faltering breath, and now with im-  
passioned abandon, —

Read from the book of a poet the rhyme of the  
fatally sundered,

Fatally met too late, and their love was their  
guilt and their anguish,

But in the night they rose, and fled away into  
the darkness,

Glad of all dangers and shames, and even of death,  
for their love’s sake.

Then, when his voice brake hollowly, falling  
and fading to silence,

Thrilled in the silence they sat, and durst not  
    behold one another,  
Feeling that wild temptation, that tender, ineffable  
    yearning,  
Drawing them heart to heart. One blind, mad  
    moment of passion  
With their fate they strove ; but out of the pang  
    of the conflict,  
Through such costly triumph as wins a waste and  
    a famine,  
Victors they came, and Love retrieved the error  
    of loving.

    So, foreknowing the years, and sharply discern-  
        ing the future,  
Guessing the riddle of life, and accepting the cruel  
    solution, —  
Side by side they sat, as far as the stars are  
    asunder.  
Carked the cricket no more, but while the audible  
    silence  
Shrilled in their ears, she, suddenly rising and  
    dragging the thistle  
Out of her clinging hair, laughed mockingly, cast-  
    ing it from her :  
“Perish the thorns and splendor, — the bloom and  
    the sweetness are perished.  
Dreary, respectable calm, polite despair, and one’s  
    Duty, —

These and the world, for dead Love! — The end  
of these modern romances!

Better than yonder rhyme? . . . Pleasant dreams  
and good night, Cousin Clement."



BY THE SEA.

I WALKED with her I love by the sea,  
The deep came up with its chanting waves,  
Making a music so great and free  
That the will and the faith, which were dead in me,  
Awoke and rose from their graves.

Chanting, and with a regal sweep  
Of their 'broidered garments up and down  
The strand, came the mighty waves of the deep,  
Dragging the wave-worn drift from its sleep  
Along the sea-sands bare and brown.

"O my soul, make the song of the sea!" I cried.  
"How it comes, with its stately tread,  
And its dreadful voice, and the splendid pride  
Of its regal garments flowing wide  
Over the land!" to my soul I said.

My soul was still; the deep went down.  
"What hast thou, my soul," I cried,  
"In thy song?" "The sea-sands bare and brown,  
With broken shells and sea-weed strown,  
And stranded drift," my soul replied.

## SAINT CHRISTOPHER.

IN the narrow Venetian street,  
On the wall above the garden gate  
(Within, the breath of the rose is sweet,  
And the nightingale sings there, soon and late),

Stands Saint Christopher, carven in stone,  
With the little child in his huge caress,  
And the arms of the baby Jesus thrown  
About his gigantic tenderness ;

And over the wall a wandering growth  
Of darkest and greenest ivy clings,  
And climbs around them, and holds them both  
In its netted clasp of knots and rings,

Clothing the saint from foot to beard  
In glittering leaves that whisper and dance  
To the child, on his mighty arm upreared,  
With a lusty summer exuberance.

To the child on his arm the faithful saint  
Looks up with a broad and tranquil joy ;

His brows and his heavy beard aslant  
Under the dimpled chin of the boy,

Who plays with the world upon his palm,  
And bends his smiling looks divine  
On the face of the giant mild and calm,  
And the glittering frolic of the vine.

He smiles on either with equal grace, —  
On the simple ivy's unconscious life,  
And the soul in the giant's lifted face,  
Strong from the peril of the strife :

For both are his own, — the innocence  
That climbs from the heart of earth to heaven,  
And the virtue that gently rises thence  
Through trial sent and victory given.

Grow, ivy, up to his countenance,  
But it cannot smile on my life as on thine ;  
Look, Saint, with thy trustful, fearless glance,  
Where I dare not lift these eyes of mine.

Venice, 1863.

## ELEGY ON JOHN BUTLER HOWELLS,

Who died, "with the first song of the birds," Wednesday morning, April 27, 1864.

## I.

IN the early morning when I wake  
At the hour that is sacred for his sake,

And hear the happy birds of spring  
In the garden under my window sing,

And through my window the daybreak blows  
The sweetness of the lily and rose,

A dormant anguish wakes with day,  
And my heart is smitten with strange dismay :

Distance wider than thine, O sea,  
Darkens between my brother and me !

## II.

A scrap of print, a few brief lines,  
The fatal word that swims and shines

On my tears, with a meaning new and dread,  
Make faltering reason know him dead,

And I would that my heart might feel it too,  
And unto its own regret be true ;

For this is the hardest of all to bear,  
That his life was so generous and fair,

So full of love, so full of hope,  
Broadening out with ample scope,

And so far from death, that his dying seems  
The idle agony of dreams

To my heart, that feels him living yet, —  
And I forget, and I forget.

## III.

He was almost grown a man when he passed  
Away, but when I kissed him last

He was still a child, and I had crept  
Up to the little room where he slept,

And thought to kiss him good-by in his sleep ;  
But he was awake to make me weep

With terrible homesickness, before  
My wayward feet had passed the door.

Round about me clung his embrace,  
And he pressed against my face his face,

As if some prescience whispered him then  
That it never, never should be again.

## IV.

Out of far-off days of boyhood dim,  
When he was a babe and I played with him,

I remember his looks and all his ways ;  
And how he grew through childhood's grace,

To the hopes, and strifes, and sports, and joys,  
And innocent vanity of boys ;

I hear his whistle at the door,  
His careless step upon the floor,

His song, his jest, his laughter yet, —  
And I forget, and I forget.

## V.

Somewhere in the graveyard that I know,  
Where the strawberries under the chestnuts grow,

They have laid him ; and his sisters set  
On his grave the flowers their tears have wet ;

And above his grave, while I write, the song  
Of the matin robin leaps sweet and strong

From the leafy dark of the chestnut-tree ;  
And many a murmuring honey-bee

On the strawberry blossoms in the grass  
Stoops by his grave and will not pass ;

And in the little hollow beneath  
The slope of the silent field of death,

The cow-bells tinkle soft and sweet,  
And the cattle go by with homeward feet,

And the squirrel barks from the sheltering limb,  
At the harmless noises not meant for him ;

And Nature, unto her loving heart  
Has taken our darling's mortal part,

Tenderly, that he may be,  
Like the song of the robin in the tree,

The blossoms, the grass, the reeds by the shore,  
A part of Summer evermore.

## VI.

I write, and the words with my tears are wet, —  
But I forget, O, I forget !

Teach me, Thou that sendest this pain,  
To know and feel my loss and gain !

Let me not falter in belief  
On his death, for that is sorest grief :

O, lift me above this wearing strife,  
Till I discern his deathless life,

Shining beyond this misty shore,  
A part of Heaven evermore.

Venice, Wednesday Morning, at Dawn,  
May 16, 1864.



THANKSGIVING.

I.

L ORD, for the erring thought  
Not into evil wrought :  
Lord, for the wicked will  
Betrayed and baffled still :  
For the heart from itself kept,  
Our thanksgiving accept.

II.

For ignorant hopes that were  
Broken to our blind prayer :  
For pain, death, sorrow, sent  
Unto our chastisement :  
For all loss of seeming good,  
Quicken our gratitude.

## A SPRINGTIME.

ONE knows the spring is coming :  
There are birds ; the fields are green ;  
There is balm in the sunlight and moonlight,  
And dew in the twilights between.

But ever there is a silence,  
A rapture great and dumb,  
That day when the doubt is ended,  
And at last the spring is come.

Behold the wonder, O silence !  
Strange as if wrought in a night, —  
The waited and lingering glory,  
The world-old, fresh delight !

O blossoms that hang like winter,  
Drifted upon the trees,  
O birds that sing in the blossoms,  
O blossom-haunting bees, —

O green, green leaves on the branches,  
O shadowy dark below,

O cool of the aisles of orchards,  
Woods that the wild flowers know, —

O air of gold and perfume,  
Wind, breathing sweet and sun,  
O sky of perfect azure —  
Day, Heaven and Earth in one ! —

Let me draw near thy secret,  
And in thy deep heart see  
How fared, in doubt and dreaming,  
The spring that is come in me.

For my soul is held in silence,  
A rapture, great and dumb, —  
For the mystery that lingered,  
The glory that is come !

## IN EARLIEST SPRING.

TOSSING his mane of snows in wildest eddies  
and tangles,  
Lion-like, March cometh in, hoarse, with tem-  
pestuous breath,  
Through all the moaning chimneys, and thwart  
all the hollows and angles  
Round the shuddering house, threatening of win-  
ter and death.

But in my heart I feel the life of the wood and the  
meadow  
Thrilling the pulses that own kindred with fibres  
that lift  
Bud and blade to the sunward, within the in-  
scrutable shadow,  
Deep in the oak's chill core, under the gathering  
drift.

Nay, to earth's life in mine some prescience, or  
dream, or desire  
(How shall I name it aright ?) comes for a mo-  
ment and goes, —

Rapture of life ineffable, perfect, — as if in the  
brier,  
Leafless there by my door, trembled a sense of  
the rose.

## THE BOBOLINKS ARE SINGING.

OUT of its fragrant heart of bloom, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
Out of its fragrant heart of bloom  
The apple-tree whispers to the room,  
“ Why art thou but a nest of gloom,  
While the bobolinks are singing ? ”

The two wan ghosts of the chamber there, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
The two wan ghosts of the chamber there  
Cease in the breath of the honeyed air,  
Sweep from the room and leave it bare,  
While the bobolinks are singing.

Then with a breath so chill and slow, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
Then with a breath so chill and slow,  
It freezes the blossoms into snow,  
The haunted room makes answer low,  
While the bobolinks are singing.

“ I know that in the meadow-land, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
I know that in the meadow-land  
The sorrowful, slender elm-trees stand,  
And the brook goes by on the other hand,  
While the bobolinks are singing.

“ But ever I see, in the brawling stream, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
But ever I see in the brawling stream  
A maiden drowned and floating dim,  
Under the water, like a dream,  
While the bobolinks are singing.

“ Buried, she lies in the meadow-land ! —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
Buried, she lies in the meadow-land,  
Under the sorrowful elms where they stand.  
Wind, blow over her soft and bland,  
While the bobolinks are singing.

“ O blow, but stir not the ghastly thing, —  
The bobolinks are singing !  
O blow, but stir not the ghastly thing  
The farmer saw so heavily swing  
From the elm, one merry morn of spring,  
While the bobolinks were singing.

“ O blow, and blow away the bloom, —  
The bobolinks are singing !

O blow, and blow away the bloom  
That sickens me in my heart of gloom,  
That sweetly sickens the haunted room,  
While the bobolinks are singing ! ”



## PRELUDE.

(TO AN EARLY BOOK OF VERSE.)

IN March the earliest bluebird came  
And caroled from the orchard-tree  
His little tremulous songs to me,  
And called upon the summer's name,

And made old summers in my heart  
All sweet with flower and sun again ;  
So that I said, "O, not in vain  
Shall be thy lay of little art,

" Though never summer sun may glow,  
Nor summer flower for thee may bloom ;  
Though winter turn in sudden gloom,  
And drowse the stirring spring with snow" ;

And learned to trust, if I should call  
Upon the sacred name of Song,  
Though chill through March I languish long,  
And never feel the May at all,

Yet may I touch, in some who hear,  
The hearts, wherein old songs asleep  
Wait but the feeblest touch to leap  
In music sweet as summer air !

I sing in March brief bluebird lays,  
And hope a May, and do not know :  
May be, the heaven is full of snow, —  
May be, there open summer days.

THE MOVERS.

SKETCH.

PARTING was over at last, and all the good-bys had been spoken.

Up the long hillside road the white-tented wagon  
moved slowly,

Bearing the mother and children, while onward  
before them the father

Trudged with his gun on his arm, and the faithful  
house-dog beside him,

Grave and sedate, as if knowing the sorrowful  
thoughts of his master.

April was in her prime, and the day in its dewy  
awaking :

Like a great flower, afar on the crest of the eastern  
woodland,

Goldenly bloomed the sun, and over the beautiful  
valley,

Dim with its dew and shadow, and bright with  
its dream of a river,

Looked to the western hills, and shone on the  
humble procession,  
Paining with splendor the children's eyes, and the  
heart of the mother.

Beauty, and fragrance, and song filled the air  
like a palpable presence.  
Sweet was the smell of the dewy leaves and the  
flowers in the wild-wood,  
Fair the long reaches of sun and shade in the  
aisles of the forest.  
Glad of the spring, and of love, and of morning,  
the wild birds were singing :  
Jays to each other called harshly, then mellowly  
fluted together ;  
Sang the oriole songs as golden and gay as his  
plumage ;  
Pensively piped the querulous quails their greet-  
ings unfrequent,  
While, on the meadow elm, the meadow lark  
gushed forth in music,  
Rapt, exultant, and shaken with the great joy of  
his singing ;  
Over the river, loud-chattering, aloft in the air,  
the kingfisher  
Hung, ere he dropped, like a bolt, in the water  
beneath him ;

Gossiping, out of the bank flew myriad twitter-  
ing swallows ;  
And in the boughs of the sycamores quarrelled  
and clamored the blackbirds.

Never for these things a moment halted the  
Movers, but onward,  
Up the long hillside road the white-tented wagon  
moved slowly.  
Till, on the summit, that overlooked all the  
beautiful valley,  
Trembling and spent, the horses came to a stand-  
still unbidden ;  
Then from the wagon the mother in silence got  
down with her children,  
Came, and stood by the father, and rested her  
hand on his shoulder.

Long together they gazed on the beautiful valley  
before them ;  
Looked on the well-known fields that stretched  
away to the woodlands,  
Where, in the dark lines of green, showed the  
milk-white crest of the dogwood,  
Snow of wild-plums in bloom, and crimson tints  
of the red-bud ;

Looked on the pasture-fields where the cattle  
were lazily grazing, —

Soft, and sweet, and thin came the faint, far notes  
of the cow-bells, —

Looked on the oft-trodden lanes, with their elder  
and blackberry borders,

Looked on the orchard, a bloomy sea, with its  
billows of blossoms.

Fair was the scene, yet suddenly strange and all  
unfamiliar,

As are the faces of friends, when the word of  
farewell has been spoken.

Long together they gazed ; then at last on the  
little log-cabin —

Home for so many years, now home no longer for-  
ever —

Rested their tearless eyes in the silent rapture of  
anguish.

Up on the morning air no column of smoke from  
the chimney

Wavering, silver and azure, rose, fading and  
brightening ever ;

Shut was the door where yesterday morning the  
children were playing ;

Lit with a gleam of the sun the window stared up  
at them blindly.

Cold was the hearthstone now, and the place was  
forsaken and empty.

Empty? Ah no! but haunted by thronging and  
tenderest fancies,  
Sad recollections of all that had been, of sorrow  
or gladness.

Still they sat there in the glow of the wide red  
fire in the winter,  
Still they sat there by the door in the cool of  
the still summer evening,  
Still the mother seemed to be singing her babe  
there to slumber,  
Still the father beheld her weep o'er the child that  
was dying,  
Still the place was haunted by all the Past's sor-  
row and gladness!

Neither of them might speak for the thoughts  
that came crowding their hearts so,  
Till, in their ignorant trouble aloud the children  
lamented;  
Then was the spell of silence dissolved, and the  
father and mother  
Burst into tears and embraced, and turned their  
dim eyes to the Westward.

Ohio, 1859.

## THROUGH THE MEADOW.

THE summer sun was soft and bland,  
As they went through the meadow land.

The little wind that hardly shook  
The silver of the sleeping brook  
Blew the gold hair about her eyes, —  
A mystery of mysteries !  
So he must often pause, and stoop,  
And all the wanton ringlets loop  
Behind her dainty ear — emprise  
Of slow event and many sighs.

Across the stream was scarce a step, —  
And yet she feared to try the leap ;  
And he, to still her sweet alarm,  
Must lift her over on his arm.

She could not keep the narrow way,  
For still the little feet would stray,  
And ever must he bend t' undo  
The tangled grasses from her shoe, —



From dainty rosebud lips in pout,  
Must kiss the perfect flower out !

Ah ! little coquette ! Fair deceit !  
Some things are bitter that were sweet.

## GONE.

IS it the shrewd October wind  
Brings the tears into her eyes ?  
Does it blow so strong that she must fetch  
Her breath in sudden sighs ?

The sound of his horse's feet grows faint,  
The Rider has passed from sight ;  
The day dies out of the crimson west,  
And coldly falls the night.

She presses her tremulous fingers tight  
Against her closéd eyes,  
And on the lonesome threshold there,  
She cowers down and cries.

THE SARCASTIC FAIR.

HER mouth is a honey-blossom,  
No doubt, as the poet sings ;  
But within her lips, the petals,  
Lurks a cruel bee, that stings.

## RAPTURE.

IN my rhyme I fable anguish,  
Feigning that my love is dead,  
Playing at a game of sadness,  
Singing hope forever fled, —

Trailing the slow robes of mourning,  
Grieving with the player's art,  
With the languid palms of sorrow  
Folded on a dancing heart.

I must mix my love with death-dust,  
Lest the draught should make me mad ;  
I must make believe at sorrow,  
Lest I perish, over-glad.

## DEAD.

## I.

SOMETHING lies in the room  
Over against my own ;  
The windows are lit with a ghastly bloom  
Of candles, burning alone, —  
Untrimmed, and all aflame  
In the ghastly silence there !

## II.

People go by the door,  
Tiptoe, holding their breath,  
And hush the talk that they held before,  
Lest they should waken Death,  
That is awake all night  
There in the candlelight !

## III.

The cat upon the stairs  
Watches with flamy eye  
For the sleepy one who shall unawares  
Let her go stealing by.

She softly, softly purrs,  
And claws at the banisters.

## IV.

The bird from out its dream  
Breaks with a sudden song,  
That stabs the sense like a sudden scream ;  
The hound the whole night long  
Howls to the moonless sky,  
So far, and starry, and high.

THE DOUBT.

SHE sits beside the low window,  
In the pleasant evening-time,  
With her face turned to the sunset,  
Reading a book of rhyme.

And the wine-light of the sunset,  
Stolen into the dainty nook,  
Where she sits in her sacred beauty,  
Lies crimson on the book.

O beautiful eyes so tender,  
Brown eyes so tender and dear,  
Did you leave your reading a moment  
Just now, as I passed near ?

Maybe, 't is the sunset flushes  
Her features, so lily-pale ;  
Maybe, 't is the lover's passion,  
She reads of in the tale.

O darling, and darling, and darling,  
If I dared to trust my thought ;

If I dared to believe what I must not,  
Believe what no one ought, —

We would read together the poem  
Of the Love that never died,  
The passionate, world-old story  
Come true, and glorified.



THE THORN.

“**E**VERY Rose, you sang, has its Thorn,  
But this has none, I know.”  
She clasped my rival's Rose  
Over her breast of snow.

I bowed to hide my pain,  
With a man's unskilful art ;  
I moved my lips, and could not say  
The Thorn was in my heart !

## THE MYSTERIES.

ONCE on my mother's breast, a child, I crept,  
Holding my breath ;  
There, safe and sad, lay shuddering, and wept  
At the dark mystery of Death.

Weary and weak, and worn with all unrest,  
Spent with the strife, —  
O mother, let me weep upon thy breast  
At the sad mystery of Life !

## THE BATTLE IN THE CLOUDS.

“The day had been one of dense mists and rains, and much of General Hooker’s battle was fought above the clouds, on the top of Lookout Mountain.” — GENERAL MEIG’S *Report of the Battle before Chattanooga.*

WHERE the dews and the rains of heaven  
have their fountain,  
Like its thunder and its lightning our brave  
burst on the foe,  
Up above the clouds on Freedom’s Lookout Mountain  
Raining life-blood like water on the valleys down  
below.  
O, green be the laurels that grow,  
O sweet be the wild-buds that blow,  
In the dells of the mountain where the brave  
are lying low.

Light of our hope and crown of our story,  
Bright as sunlight, pure as starlight shall their  
deeds of daring glow,  
While the day and the night out of heaven shed  
their glory,

On Freedom's Lookout Mountain whence they  
routed Freedom's foe.

O, soft be the gales when they go

Through the pines on the summit where  
they blow,

Chanting solemn music for the souls that passed  
below.

FOR ONE OF THE KILLED.

THERE on the field of battle  
Lies the young warrior dead :  
Who shall speak in the soldier's honor ?  
How shall his praise be said ?

Cannon, there in the battle,  
Thundered the soldier's praise,  
Hark ! how the volumed volleys echo  
Down through the far-off days !

Tears for the grief of a father,  
For a mother's anguish, tears ;  
But for him that died in his country's battle,  
Glory and endless years.

## THE TWO WIVES.

(TO COLONEL J. G. M., IN MEMORY OF THE EVENT BEFORE  
ATLANTA.)

## I.

THE colonel rode by his picket-line  
In the pleasant morning sun,  
That glanced from him far off to shine  
On the crouching rebel picket's gun.

## II.

From his command the captain strode  
Out with a grave salute,  
And talked with the colonel as he rode ; —  
The picket levelled his piece to shoot.

## III.

The colonel rode and the captain walked, —  
The arm of the picket tired ;  
Their faces almost touched as they talked,  
And, swerved from his aim, the picket fired.

## IV.

The captain fell at the horse's feet,  
Wounded and hurt to death,

Calling upon a name that was sweet  
As God is good, with his dying breath.

v.

And the colonel that leaped from his horse and  
knelt  
To close the eyes so dim,  
A high remorse for God's mercy felt,  
Knowing the shot was meant for him.

VI.

And he whispered, prayer-like, under his breath,  
The name of his own young wife :  
For Love, that had made his friend's peace with  
Death,  
Alone could make his with life.

## BEREAVED.

THE passionate humming-birds cling  
To the honeysuckles' hearts ;  
In and out at the open window  
The twittering house-wren darts,  
And the sun is bright.

June is young, and warm, and sweet ;  
The morning is gay and new ;  
Glimmers yet the grass of the door-yard,  
Pearl-gray with fragrant dew,  
And the sun is bright.

From the mill, upon the stream,  
A busy murmur swells ;  
On to the pasture go the cattle,  
Lowling, with tinkling bells,  
And the sun is bright.

She gathers his playthings up,  
And dreamily puts them by ;  
Children are playing in the meadow,  
She hears their joyous cry,  
And the sun is bright.



She sits and clasps her brow,  
And looks with swollen eyes  
On the landscape that reels and dances, —  
To herself she softly cries,  
And the sun is bright.

## THE SNOW-BIRDS.

THE lonesome graveyard lieth,  
A deep with silent waves  
Of night-long snow, all white, and billowed  
Over the hidden graves.

The snow-birds come in the morning,  
Flocking and fluttering low,  
And light on the graveyard brambles,  
And twitter there in the snow.

The Singer, old and weary,  
Looks out from his narrow room :  
“ Ah, me ! but my thoughts are snow-birds,  
Haunting a graveyard gloom,

“ Where all the Past is buried  
And dead, these many years,  
Under the drifted whiteness  
Of frozen falls of tears.

“ Poor birds ! that know not summer,  
Nor sun, nor flowers fair, —  
Only the graveyard brambles,  
And graves, and winter air ! ”

## VAGARY.

UP and down the dusty street,  
I hurry with my burning feet ;  
Against my face the wind-waves beat,  
Fierce from the city-sea of heat.

Deep in my heart the vision is,  
Of meadow grass and meadow trees  
Blown silver in the summer breeze,  
And ripe, red, hillside strawberries.

My sense the city tumult fills, —  
The tumult that about me reels  
Of strokes and cries, and feet and wheels.  
Deep in my dream I list, and, hark !  
From out the maple's leafy dark,  
The fluting of the meadow lark !

About the throngéd street I go :  
There is no face here that I know ;  
Of all that pass me to and fro  
There is no face here that I know.  
Deep in my soul's most sacred place,  
With a sweet pain I look and trace  
The features of a tender face,  
All lit with love and girlish grace.

Some spell is on me, for I seem  
A memory of the past, a dream  
Of happiness remembered dim,  
    Unto myself that walk the street  
Scathed with the city's noontide heat,  
    With puzzled brain and burning feet.

## FEUERBILDER.

THE children sit by the fireside  
With their little faces in bloom;  
And behind, the lily-pale mother,  
Looking out of the gloom,

Flushes in cheek and forehead  
With a light and sudden start;  
But the father sits there silent,  
From the firelight apart.

“Now, what dost thou see in the embers?  
Tell it to me, my child,”  
Whispers the lily-pale mother  
To her daughter sweet and mild.

“O, I see a sky and a moon  
In the coals and ashes there,  
And under, two are walking  
In a garden of flowers so fair.

“A lady gay, and her lover,  
Talking with low-voiced words,

Not to waken the dreaming flowers  
And the sleepy little birds."

Back in the gloom the mother  
Shrinks with a sudden sigh.  
"Now, what dost thou see in the embers?"  
Cries the father to the boy.

"O, I see a wedding-procession  
Go in at the church's door, —  
Ladies in silk and knights in steel, —  
A hundred of them, and more.

"The bride's face is as white as a lily,  
And the groom's head is white as snow ;  
And without, with plumes and tapers,  
A funeral paces slow."

Loudly then laughed the father,  
And shouted again for cheer,  
And called to the drowsy housemaid  
To fetch him a pipe and beer.

## AVERY.

[NIAGARA, 1853.]

## I.

ALL night long they heard in the houses be-  
side the shore,  
Heard, or seemed to hear, through the multitudi-  
nous roar,  
Out of the hell of the rapids as 't were a lost soul's  
cries, —  
Heard and could not believe; and the morning  
mocked their eyes,  
Showing, where wildest and fiercest the waters  
leaped up and ran  
Raving round him and past, the visage of a man  
Clinging, or seeming to cling, to the trunk of a  
tree that, caught  
Fast in the rocks below, scarce out of the surges  
raught.  
Was it a life, could it be, to yon slender hope that  
clung?  
Shrill, above all the tumult the answering terror  
rung.

## II.

Under the weltering rapids a boat from the bridge  
is drowned,  
Over the rocks the lines of another are tangled  
and wound ;  
And the long, fateful hours of the morning have  
wasted soon,  
As it had been in some blessed trance, and now it  
is noon.  
Hurry, now with the raft ! But O, build it strong  
and stanch,  
And to the lines and treacherous rocks look well as  
you launch !  
Over the foamy tops of the waves, and their foam-  
sprent sides,  
Over the hidden reefs, and through the embattled  
tides,  
Onward rushes the raft, with many a lurch and  
leap, —  
Lord ! if it strike him loose from the hold he  
scarce can keep !  
  
No ! through all peril unharmed, it reaches him  
harmless at last,  
And to its proven strength he lashes his weakness  
fast.



Now, for the shore ! But steady, steady, my men,  
and slow ;  
Taut, now, the quivering lines ; now slack ; and  
so, let her go !  
Thronging the shores around stand the pitying  
multitude ;  
Wan as his own are their looks, and a nightmare  
seems to brood  
Heavy upon them, and heavy the silence hangs  
on all,  
Save for the rapids' plunge, and the thunder of  
the fall.  
But on a sudden thrills from the people still and  
pale,  
Chorussing his unheard despair, a desperate wail :  
Caught on a lurking point of rock it sways and  
swings,  
Sport of the pitiless waters, the raft to which he  
clings.

## III.

All the long afternoon it idly swings and sways ;  
And on the shore the crowd lifts up its hands and  
prays :  
Lifts to heaven and wrings the hands so helpless  
to save,

Prays for the mercy of God on him whom the rock  
and the wave  
Battle for, fettered betwixt them, and who, amidst  
their strife,  
Struggles to help his helpers, and fights so hard  
for his life, —  
Tugging at rope and at reef, while men weep and  
women swoon.  
Priceless second by second, so wastes the after-  
noon,  
And it is sunset now ; and another boat and the  
last  
Down to him from the bridge through the rapids  
has safely passed.

## IV.

Wild through the crowd comes flying a man that  
nothing can stay,  
Maddening against the gate that is locked athwart  
his way.  
“ No ! we keep the bridge for them that can help  
him. You,  
Tell us, who are you ? ” “ His brother ! ” “ God  
help you both ! Pass through.”  
Wild, with wide arms of imploring he calls aloud  
to him,

Unto the face of his brother, scarce seen in the  
distance dim ;  
But in the roar of the rapids his fluttering words  
are lost  
As in a wind of autumn the leaves of autumn are  
tossed.  
And from the bridge he sees his brother sever the  
rope  
Holding him to the raft, and rise secure in his  
hope ;  
Sees all as in a dream the terrible pageantry, —  
Populous shores, the woods, the sky, the birds  
flying free ;  
Sees, then, the form, — that, spent with effort and  
fasting and fear,  
Flings itself feebly and fails of the boat that is  
lying so near, —  
Caught in the long-baffled clutch of the rapids,  
and rolled and hurled  
Headlong on to the cataract's brink, and out of  
the world.

## BOPEEP : A PASTORAL.

“O, to what uses shall we put  
The wildweed flower that simply blows ?  
And is there any moral shut  
Within the bosom of the rose ?”

TENNYSON.

## I.

SHE lies upon the soft, enamoured grass,  
I' the wooing shelter of an apple-tree,  
And at her feet the trancéd brook is glass,  
And in the blossoms over her the bee  
Hangs charméd of his sordid industry ;  
For love of her the light wind will not pass.

## II.

Her golden hair, blown over her red lips,  
That seem two rose-leaves softly breathed apart,  
Athwart her rounded throat like sunshine slips ;  
Her small hand, resting on her beating heart,  
The crook that tells her peaceful shepherd-art  
Scarce keeps with light and tremulous finger-tips.

## III.

She is as fair as any shepherdess  
That ever was in mask or Christmas scene :

Bright silver spangles hath she on her dress,  
And of her red-heeled shoes appears the sheen ;  
And she hath ribbons of such blue or green  
As best suits pastoral people's comeliness.

## IV.

She sleeps, and it is in the month of May,  
And the whole land is full of the delight  
Of music and sweet scents ; and all the day  
The sun is gold ; the moon is pearl all night,  
And like a paradise the world is bright,  
And like a young girl's hopes the world is gay.

## V.

So waned the hours ; and while her beauteous sleep  
Was blest with many a happy dream of Love,  
Untended still, her silly, vagrant sheep  
Afar from that young shepherdess did rove,  
Along the vales and through the gossip grove,  
O'er daisied meads and up the thymy steep.

## VI.

Then (for it happens oft when harm is nigh,  
Our dreams grow haggard till at last we wake)  
She thought that from the little runnel by  
There crept upon a sudden forth a snake,  
And stung her hand, and fled into the brake ;  
Whereat she sprang up with a bitter cry,

## VII.

And wildly over all that place did look,  
And could not spy her ingrate, wanton flock, —  
Not there among tall grasses by the brook,  
Not there behind the mossy-bearded rock ;  
And pitiless Echo answered with a mock  
When she did sorrow that she was forsook.

## VIII.

Alas ! the scattered sheep might not be found,  
And long and loud that gentle maid did weep,  
Till in her blurréd sight the hills went round,  
And, circling far, field, wood, and stream did  
sweep ;  
And on the ground the miserable Bopeep  
Fell and forgot her troubles in a swoond.

## IX.

When she awoke, the sun long time had set,  
And all the land was sleeping in the moon,  
And all the flowers with dim, sad dewes were wet,  
As they had wept to see her in that swoon.  
It was about the night's low-breathing noon ;  
Only the larger stars were waking yet.

## X.

Bopeep, the fair and hapless shepherdess,  
Rose from her swooning in a sore dismay,

And tried to smooth her damp and rumpled dress,  
That showed in truth a grievous disarray ;  
Then where the brook the wan moon's mirror lay,  
She laved her eyes, and curled each golden tress.

## XI.

And looking to her ribbons, if they were  
As ribbons of a shepherdess should be,  
She took the hat that she was wont to wear  
(Bedecked it was with ribbons flying free  
As ever man in opera might see),  
And set it on her curls of yellow hair.

## XII.

"And I will go and seek my sheep," she said,  
"Through every distant land until I die ;  
But when they bring me hither, cold and dead,  
Let me beneath these apple-blossoms lie,  
With this dear, faithful, lovely runnel nigh,  
Here, where my cru — cru — cruel sheep have fed."

## XIII.

Thus sorrow and despair make bold Bopeep,  
And forth she springs, and hurries on her way :  
Across the lurking rivulet she can leap,  
No sombre forest shall her quest delay,  
No crooked vale her eager steps bewray :  
What dreadeth she that seeketh her lost sheep ?

## XIV.

By many a pond, where timorous water-birds,  
With clattering cries and throbbing wings, arose,  
By many a pasture, where the soft-eyed herds  
Looked shadow-huge in their unmoved repose,  
Long through the lonesome night that sad one  
goes  
And fills the solitude with wailing words ;

## XV.

So that the little field-mouse dreams of harm,  
Snuggled away from harm beneath the weeds ;  
The violet, sleeping on the clover's arm,  
Wakes, and is cold with thoughts of dreadful  
deeds ;  
The pensive people of the water-reeds  
Hark with a mute and dolorous alarm.

## XVI.

And the fond hearts of all the turtle-doves  
Are broken in compassion of her woe,  
And every tender little bird that loves  
Feels in his breast a sympathetic throe ;  
And flowers are sad wherever she may go,  
And hoarse with sighs the waterfalls and groves.



## XVII.

The pale moon droppeth low ; star after star  
Grows faint and slumbers in the gray of dawn ;  
And still she lingers not, but hurries far,  
Till in a dreary wilderness withdrawn  
Through tangled woods she lorn and lost moves  
on,  
Where griffins dire and dreadful dragons are.

## XVIII.

Her ribbons all are dripping with the dew,  
Her red-heeled shoes are torn, and stained with  
mire,  
Her tender arms the angry sharpness rue  
Of many a scraggy thorn and envious brier ;  
And poor Bopeep, with no sweet pity nigh her,  
Wrings her small hands, and knows not what to do.

## XIX.

And on that crude and rugged ground she sinks,  
And soon her seeking had been ended there,  
But through the trees a fearful glimmer shrinks,  
And of a hermit's dwelling she is 'ware :  
At the dull pane a dull-eyed taper blinks,  
Drowsed with long vigils and the morning air.

## XX.

Thither she trembling moves, and at the door  
Falls down, and cannot either speak or stir :  
The hermit comes, — with no white beard before,  
Nor coat of skins, nor cap of shaggy fur :  
It was a comely youth that lifted her,  
And to his hearth, and to his breakfast, bore.

## XXI.

Arrayed he was in princeliest attire,  
And of as goodly presence sooth was he  
As any little maiden might admire,  
Or any king-beholding cat might see  
“ My poor Bopeep,” he sigheth piteously,  
“ Rest here, and warm you at a hermit’s fire.”

## XXII.

She looked so beautiful, there, mute and white,  
He kissed her on the lips and on the eyes  
(The most a prince could do in such a plight) ;  
But chiefly gazed on her in still surprise,  
And when he saw her lily eyelids rise,  
For him the whole world had no fairer sight.

## XXIII.

“ Rude is my fare : a bit of venison steak,  
A dish of honey and a glass of wine,

With clean white bread, is the poor feast I make.  
Be served, I pray : I think this flask is fine,"  
He said. " Hard is this hermit life of mine :  
This day I will its weariness forsake."

## XXIV.

And then he told her how it chanced that he,  
King Cole's son, in that forest held his court,  
And the sole reason that there seemed to be  
Was, he was being hermit there for sport ;  
But he confessed the life was not his forte,  
And therewith both laughed out right jollily.

## XXV.

And sly Bopeep forgot her sheep again  
In gay discourse with that engaging youth :  
Love hath such sovran remedies for pain !  
But then he was a handsome prince, in truth,  
And both were young, and both were silly, sooth,  
And everything to Love but love seems vain.

## XXVI.

They took them down the silver-claspéd book  
That this young anchorite's predecessor kept, —  
A holy seer, — and through it they did look ;

Sometimes their idle eyes together crept,  
Sometimes their lips ; but still the leaves they  
swept,  
Until they found a shepherd's pictured crook.

## XXVII.

And underneath was writ it should befall  
On such a day, in such a month and year,  
A maiden fair, a young prince brave and tall,  
By such a chance should come together here.  
They were the people, that was very clear :  
"O love," the prince said, "let us read it all!"

## XXVIII.

And thus the hermit's prophecy ran on :  
Though she her lost sheep wist not where to find,  
Yet should she bid her weary care begone,  
And banish every doubt from her sweet mind :  
They, with their little snow-white tails behind,  
Homeward would go, if they were left alone.

## XXIX.

They closed the book, and in her happy eyes  
The prince read truth and love forevermore, —  
Better than any hermit's prophecies !  
They passed together from the cavern's door ;  
Embraced, they turned to look at it once more,  
And over it beheld the glad sun rise,

## xxx.

That streamed before them aisles of dusk and gold  
Under the song-swept arches of the wood,  
And forth they went, tranced in each other's hold,  
Down through that rare and luminous solitude,  
Their happy hearts enchanted in the mood  
Of morning, and of May, and romance old.

## xxxI.

Sometimes the saucy leaves would kiss her cheeks,  
And he must kiss their wanton kiss away ;  
To die beneath her feet the wood-flower seeks,  
The quivering aspen feels a fine dismay,  
And many a scented blossom on the spray  
In odorous sighs its passionate longing speaks.

## xxxII.

And forth they went down to that stately stream,  
Bowed over by the ghostly sycamores  
(Awearily, as if some heavy dream  
Held them in languor), but whose opulent shores  
With pearléd shells and dusts of precious ores  
Were tremulous brilliance in the morning beam ;

## xxxIII.

Where waited them, beside the lustrous sand,  
A silk-winged shallop, sleeping on the flood ;

And smoothly wafted from the hither strand,  
Across the calm, broad stream they lightly rode,  
Under them still the silver fishes stood ;  
The eager lilies, on the other land,

## XXXIV.

Beckoned them ; but where the castle shone  
With diamonded turrets and a wall  
Of gold-embedded pearl and costly stone,  
Their vision to its peerless splendor thrall  
The maiden fair, the young prince brave and tall,  
Thither with light, unlingering feet pressed on.

## XXXV.

A gallant train to meet this loving pair,  
In silk and steel, moves from the castle door,  
And up the broad and ringing castle stair  
They go with gleeful minstrelsy before,  
And " Hail our prince and princess evermore !"  
From all the happy throng is greeting there.

## XXXVI.

And in the hall the prince's sire, King Cole,  
Sitting with crown and royal ermine on,  
His fiddlers three behind with pipe and bowl,  
Rises and moves to lift his kneeling son,  
Greeting his bride with kisses many a one,  
And tears and laughter from his jolly soul ;

XXXVII.

Then both his children to a window leads  
That over daisied pasture-land looks out,  
And shows Bopeep where her lost flock wide feeds,  
And every frolic lambkin leaps about.  
She hears Boy-Blue, that lazy shepherd, shout,  
Slow pausing from his pipe of mellow reeds ;

XXXVIII.

And, turning, peers into her prince's eyes ;  
Then, caught and clasped against her prince's  
heart,  
Upon her breath her answer wordless dies,  
And leaves her gratitude to sweeter art, —  
To lips from which the bloom shall never part,  
To looks wherein the summer never dies !

## WHILE SHE SANG.

## I.

SHE sang, and I heard the singing,  
Far out of the wretched past,  
Of meadow-larks in the meadow,  
In a breathing of the blast.

Cold through the clouds of sunset  
The thin red sunlight shone,  
Staining the gloom of the woodland  
Where I walked and dreamed alone ;

And glinting with chilly splendor  
The meadow under the hill,  
Where the lingering larks were lurking  
In the sere grass hid and still.

Out they burst with their singing,  
Their singing so loud and gay ;  
They made in the heart of October  
A sudden ghastly May,

That faded and ceased with their singing.  
The thin red sunlight paled,



And through the boughs above me  
The wind of evening wailed ; —

Wailed, and the light of evening  
Out of the heaven died ;  
And from the marsh by the river  
The lonesome killdee cried.

## II.

The song is done, but a phantom  
Of music haunts the chords,  
That thrill with its subtile presence,  
And grieve for the dying words.

And in the years that are perished,  
Far back in the wretched past,  
I see on the May-green meadows  
The white snow falling fast ; —

Falling, and falling, and falling,  
As still and cold as death,  
On the bloom of the odorous orchard,  
On the small, meek flowers beneath ;

On the roofs of the village-houses,  
On the long, silent street,  
Where its plumes are soiled and broken  
Under the passing feet ;

On the green crest of the woodland,  
On the cornfields far apart ;  
On the cowering birds in the gable,  
And on my desolate heart.

A POET.

FROM wells where Truth in secret lay  
He saw the midnight stars by day.

“O marvellous gift !” the many cried,  
“O cruel gift !” his voice replied.

The stars were far, and cold, and high,  
That glimmered in the noonday sky ;

He yearned toward the sun in vain,  
That warmed the lives of other men.

## CONVENTION.

HE falters on the threshold,  
She lingers on the stair :  
Can it be that was his footstep ?  
Can it be that she is there ?

Without is tender yearning,  
And tender love is within ;  
They can hear each other's heart-beats,  
But a wooden door is between.

THE POETS' FRIENDS.

THE robin sings in the elm ;  
The cattle stand beneath,  
Sedate and grave, with great brown eyes  
And fragrant meadow-breath.

They listen to the flattered bird,  
The wise-looking, stupid things ;  
And they never understand a word  
Of all the robin sings.

## NO LOVE LOST.

## A ROMANCE OF TRAVEL.

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1862.BERTHA — *Writing from Venice.*

## I.

O N your heart I feign myself fallen — ah,  
heavier burden,  
Darling, of sorrow and pain than ever shall rest  
there! I take you  
Into these friendless arms of mine, that you cannot  
escape me ;  
Closer and closer I fold you, and tell you all, and  
you listen  
Just as you used at home, and you let my sobs  
and my silence  
Speak, when the words will not come — and you  
understand and forgive me.  
— Ah! no, no! but I write, with the wretched  
bravado of distance,  
What you must read unmoved by the pity too far  
for entreaty.

## II.

Well, I could never have loved him, but when  
he sought me and asked me, —  
When to the men that offered their lives, the love  
of a woman  
Seemed so little to give! — I promised the love  
that he asked me,  
Sent him to war with my kiss on his lips, and  
thought him my hero.  
Afterward came the doubt, and out of long ques-  
tion, self-knowledge, —  
Came that great defeat, and the heart of the  
nation was withered ;  
Mine leaped high with the awful relief won of  
death. But the horror,  
Then, of the crime that was wrought in that guilty  
moment of rapture, —  
Guilty as if my will had winged the bullet that  
struck him, —  
Clung to me day and night, and dreaming I saw  
him forever,  
Looking through battle-smoke with sorrowful eyes  
of upbraiding,  
Or, in the moonlight lying gray, or dimly ap-  
proaching,  
Holding toward me his arms, that still held nearer  
and nearer,

Folded about me at last . . . and I would I had  
died in the fever! —

Better then than now, and better than ever here-  
after!

## III.

Weary as some illusion of fever to me was the  
ocean —

Storm-swept, scourged with bitter rains, and wan-  
dering always

Onward from sky to sky with endless processions  
of surges,

Knowing not life nor death, but since the light  
was, the first day,

Only enduring unrest till the darkness possess it,  
the last day.

Over its desolate depths we voyaged away from all  
living:

All the world behind us waned into vaguest re-  
moteness;

Names, and faces, and scenes recurred like that  
broken remembrance

Of the anterior, bodiless life of the spirit, — the  
trouble

Of a bewildered brain, or the touch of the Hand  
that created, —

And when the ocean ceased at last like a faded  
illusion,



Europe itself seemed only a vision of eld and of  
sadness.

Naught but the dark in my soul remained to me  
constant and real,

Growing and taking the thoughts bereft of happier  
uses,

Blotting all sense of lapse from the days that with  
swift iteration

Were and were not. They fable the bright days  
the fleetest:

These that had nothing to give, that had nothing  
to bring or to promise,

Went as one day alone. For me was no alter-  
nation

Save from my dull despair to wild and reckless  
rebellion,

When the regret for my sin was turned to ruthless  
self-pity —

When I hated him whose love had made me its  
victim,

Through his faith and my falsehood yet claiming  
me. Then I was smitten

With so great remorse, such grief for him, and  
compassion,

That, if he could have come back to me, I had  
welcomed and loved him

More than man ever was loved. Alas, for me that  
another

Holds his place in my heart evermore ! Alas, that  
I listened  
When the words, whose daring lured my spirit and  
lulled it,  
Seemed to take my blame away with my will of  
resistance !

Do not make haste to condemn me : my will  
was the will of a woman, —  
Fain to be broken by love. Yet unto the last I  
endeavored  
What I could to be faithful still to the past and  
my penance ;  
And as we stood that night in the old Roman  
garden together —  
By the fountain whose passionate tears but now  
had implored me  
In his pleading voice — and he waited my answer,  
I told him  
All that had been before of delusion and guilt, and  
conjured him  
Not to darken his fate with mine. The costly  
endeavor  
Only was subtler betrayal. O me, from the pang  
of confession,  
Sprang what strange delight, as I tore from its  
lurking that horror —

Brooded upon so long—with the hope that at  
last I might see it  
Through his eyes, unblurred by the tears that  
disordered my vision !  
Oh, with what rapturous triumph I humbled my  
spirit before him,  
That he might lift me and soothe me, and make  
that dreary remembrance,  
All this confused present, seem only some sickness  
of fancy,  
Only a morbid folly, no certain and actual trouble !  
If from that refuge I fled with words of too feeble  
denial—  
Bade him hate me, with sobs that entreated his  
tenderest pity,  
Moved mute lips and left the meaningless farewell  
unuttered—  
She that never has loved, alone can wholly con-  
demn me.

## IV.

How could he other than follow? My heart had  
bidden him follow,  
Nor had my lips forbidden ; and Rome yet glim-  
mered behind me,  
When my soul yearned towards his from the sudden  
forlornness of absence.

Everywhere his face looked from vanishing glimpses  
of faces,  
Everywhere his voice reached my senses in fugitive  
cadence.  
Sick, through the storied cities, with wretched  
hopes, and upbraidings  
Of my own heart for its hopes, I went from wonder  
to wonder,  
Blind to them all, or only beholding them wronged,  
and related,  
Through some trick of wayward thought, to myself  
and my trouble.  
Not surprise nor regret, but a fierce, precipitate  
gladness  
Sent the blood to my throbbing heart when I  
found him in Venice.  
“Waiting for you,” he whispered; “you would  
so.” I answered him nothing.

## v.

Father, whose humor grows more silent and  
ever more absent  
(Changed in all but love for me since the death  
of my mother),  
Willing to see me contented at last, and trusting  
us wholly,  
Left us together alone in our world of love and of  
beauty.

So, by noon and by night, we two have wandered  
in Venice,  
Where the beautiful lives in vivid and constant  
caprices,  
Yet, where the charm is so perfect that nothing  
fantastic surprises  
More than in dreams, and one's life with the life  
of the city is blended  
In a luxurious calm, and the tumult without and  
beyond it  
Seems but the emptiest fable of vain aspiration  
and labor.

Yes, from all that makes this Venice sole among  
cities,  
Peerless forever, — the still lagoons that sleep in  
the sunlight,  
Lulled by their island-bells; the night's myste-  
rious waters  
Lit through their shadowy depths by stems of  
splendor, that blossom  
Into the lamps that float, like flamy lotuses,  
over;  
Narrow and secret canals, that dimly gleaming  
and glooming  
Under palace-walls and numberless arches of  
bridges,

List no sound but the dip of the gondolier's oar  
and his warning  
Cried from corner to corner; the sad, superb  
Canalazzo  
Mirroring marvellous grandeur and beauty, and  
dreaming of glory  
Out of the empty homes of her lords departed;  
the footways  
Wandering sunless between the walls of the houses,  
and stealing  
Glimpses, through rusted cancelli, of lurking green-  
ness of gardens,  
Wild-grown flowers and broken statues and moul-  
dering frescos;  
Thoroughfares filled with traffic, and throngs ever  
ebbing and flowing  
To and from the heart of the city, whose pride and  
devotion,  
Lifting high the bells of St. Mark's like prayers  
unto heaven,  
Stretch a marble embrace of palaces toward the  
cathedral  
Orient, gorgeous, and flushed with color and light,  
like the morning! —  
From the lingering waste that is not yet ruin in  
Venice,  
And her phantasmal show, through all, of being  
and doing —

Came a strange joy to us, untouched by regret for  
the idle  
Days without yesterdays that died into nights  
without morrows.  
Here, in our paradise of love we reigned, new-  
created,  
As in the youth of the world, in the days before  
evil and conscience.  
Ah! in our fair, lost world was neither fearing nor  
doubting,  
Neither the sickness of old remorse nor the gloom  
of foreboding, —  
Only the glad surrender of all individual being  
Unto him whom I loved, and in whose tender  
possession,  
Fate-free, my soul reposed from its anguish.

— Of these things I write you  
As of another's experience; part of my own they  
no longer  
Seem to me now, through the doom that darkens  
the past like the future.

## VI.

Golden the sunset gleamed, above the city  
behind us,  
Out of a city of clouds as fairy and lovely as  
Venice,

While we looked at the fishing-sails of purple and  
yellow  
Far on the rim of the sea, whose light and musical  
surges  
Broke along the sands with a faint, reiterant  
sadness.  
But, when the sails had darkened into black wings,  
through the twilight  
Sweeping away into night — past the broken tombs  
of the Hebrews  
Homeward we sauntered slowly, through dew-  
sweet, blossomy alleys;  
So drew near the boat by errant and careless  
approaches,  
Entered, and left with indolent pulses the Lido  
behind us.

All the sunset had paled, and the campanili  
of Venice  
Rose like the masts of a mighty fleet moored there  
in the water.  
Lights flashed furtively to and fro through the  
deepening twilight.  
Massed in one thick shade lay the Gardens; the  
numberless islands  
Lay like shadows upon the lagoons. And on us  
as we loitered



By their enchanted coasts, a spell of ineffable  
sweetness  
Fell and made us at one with them ; and silent  
and blissful  
Shadows we seemed, that drifted on through a  
being of shadow,  
Vague, indistinct to ourselves, unbounded by hope  
or remembrance.  
Yet we knew the beautiful night, as it grew from  
the evening :  
Far beneath us and far above us the vault of the  
heavens  
Glittered and darkened ; and now the moon, that  
had haunted the daylight  
Thin and pallid, dimmed the stars with her fulness  
of splendor,  
And over all the lagoons fell the silvery rain of the  
moonbeams,  
As in the song the young girls sang while their  
gondolas passed us, —  
Sang in the joy of love, or youth's desire of loving.

Balmy night of the South ! O perfect night of  
the Summer !  
Night of the distant dark, of the near and tender  
effulgence ! —  
How from my despair are thy peace and loveliness  
frightened !

For, while our boat lay there at the will of the  
light undulations,  
Idle as if our mood imbued and controlled it,  
yet ever  
Seeming to bear us on athwart those shining  
expanses  
Out to shining seas beyond pursuit or returning —  
There, while we lingered, and lingered, and would  
not break from our rapture,  
Down the mirrored night another gondola drifted  
Nearer and slowly nearer our own, and moonlighted  
faces  
Stared. And that sweet trance grew a rigid and  
dreadful possession,  
Which, if no dream indeed, yet mocked with such  
semblance of dreaming,  
That, as it happens in dreams, when a dear face,  
stooping to kiss us,  
Takes, ere the lips have touched, some malign and  
horrible aspect,  
*His* face faded away, and the face of the Dead —  
of that other —  
Flashed on mine, and writhing, through every  
change of emotion, —  
Wild amaze and scorn, accusation and pitiless  
mocking, —  
Vanished into the swoon whose blackness encom-  
passed and hid me.

PHILIP — *To Bertha.*

I AM not sure, I own, that if first I had seen  
my delusion  
When I saw *you*, last night, I should be so ready  
to give you  
Now your promises back, and hold myself nothing  
above you,  
That it is mine to offer a freedom you never could  
ask for.  
Yet, believe me, indeed, from no bitter heart I  
release you :  
You are as free of me now as though I had died  
in the battle,  
Or as I never had lived. Nay, if it is mine to  
forgive you,  
Go without share of the blame that could hardly  
be all upon your side.

Ghosts are not sensitive things ; yet, after my  
death in the papers,  
Sometimes a harrowing doubt assailed this impalpable essence :  
Had I done so well to plead my cause at that  
moment,  
When your consent must be yielded less to the  
lover than soldier ?

"Not so well," I was answered by that ethereal  
conscience

Ghosts have about them, "and not so nobly or  
wisely as might be."

— Truly, I loved you, then, as now I love you no  
longer.

I was a prisoner then, and this doubt in the  
languor of sickness  
Came ; and it clung to my convalescence, and  
grew to the purpose,  
After my days of captivity ended, to seek you and  
solve it,  
And, if I haply had erred, to undo the wrong, and  
release you.

Well, you have solved me the doubt. I dare to  
trust that you wept me,  
Just a little, at first, when you heard of me dead  
in the battle?  
For we were plighted, you know, and even in this  
saintly humor,  
I would scarce like to believe that my loss had  
merely relieved you.  
Yet, I say, it was prudent and well not to wait for  
my coming  
Back from the dead. If it may be I sometimes  
had cherished a fancy

That I had won some right to the palm with the  
pang of the martyr, —  
Fondly intended, perhaps, some splendor of self-  
abnegation, —  
Doubtless all that was a folly which merciful  
chances have spared me.  
No, I am far from complaining that Circumstance  
coolly has ordered  
Matters of tragic fate in such a commonplace  
fashion.  
How do I know, indeed, that the easiest isn't the  
best way?

Friendly adieux end this note, and our little  
comedy with it.

FANNY — *To Clara.*

I.

YES, I promised to write, but how shall I write  
to you, darling?  
Venice we reached last Monday, wild for canals  
and for color,  
Palaces, prisons, lagoons, and gondolas, bravoos,  
and moonlight,  
All the mysterious, dreadful, beautiful things in  
existence.

Fred had joined us at Naples, insuff'rably knowing  
and travelled,  
Wise in the prices of things and great at tempestuous bargains,  
Rich in the costly nothing our youthful travellers  
buy here,  
At a prodigious outlay of time and money and  
trouble ;  
Utter confusion of facts, and talking the wildest of  
pictures, —  
Pyramids, battle-fields, bills, and examinations of  
luggage,  
Passports, policemen, porters, and how he got  
through his tobacco, —  
Ignorant, handsome, full-bearded, brown, and good-natured as ever :  
Annie thinks him perfect, and I well enough for  
a brother.  
Also, a friend of Fred's came with us from Naples  
to Venice ;  
And, altogether, I think, we are rather agreeable  
people,  
For we've been taking our pleasure at all times in  
perfect good-humor ;  
Which is an excellent thing that you'll understand  
when you've travelled,  
Seen Recreation dead-beat and cross, and learnt  
what a burden

Frescos, for instance, can be, and, in general, what  
an affliction

Life is apt to become among the antiques and old  
masters.

Venice we've thoroughly done, and it's perfectly  
true of the pictures —

Titians and Tintoretos, and Palmas and Paul  
Veroneses ;

Neither are gondolas fictions, but verities, hearse-  
like and swan-like,

Quite as the heart could wish. And one finds, to  
one's infinite comfort,

Venice just as unique as one's fondest visions have  
made it :

Palaces and mosquitoes rise from the water  
together,

And, in the city's streets, the salt-sea is ebbing  
and flowing

Several inches or more.

— Ah ! let me not wrong thee, O Venice !

Fairest, forlornest, and saddest of all the cities, and  
dearest !

Dear, for my heart has won here deep peace from  
cruel confusion ;

And in this lucent air, whose night is but tenderer  
noon-day,

Fear is forever dead, and hope has put on the immortal !

— There ! and you need not laugh. I 'm coming to something directly.

One thing : I 've bought you a chain of the famous fabric of Venice —

Something peculiar and quaint, and of such a delicate texture

That you must wear it embroidered upon a riband of velvet,

If you would have the effect of its exquisite fineness and beauty.

“ Is n't it very frail ? ” I asked of the workman who made it.

“ Strong enough, if you will, to bind a lover, signora,” —

With an expensive smile. 'T was bought near the Bridge of Rialto.

(Shylock, you know.) In our shopping, Aunt May and Fred do the talking :

Fred begins always in French, with the most delicious effront'ry,

Only to end in profoundest humiliation and English.

Aunt, however, scorns to speak any tongue but Italian :

“ Quanto per these ones here ? ” and “ What did you say was the prezzo ? ”



“Ah! troppo caro! *Too much!* No, no! Don’t I  
tell you it’s troppo?”

All the while insists that the gondolieri shall  
show us

What she calls Titian’s palazzo, and pines for the  
house of Othello.

Annie, the dear little goose, believes in Fred and  
her mother

With an enchanting abandon. She does n’t at all  
understand them,

But she has some twilight views of their cleverness.  
Father is quiet,

Now and then ventures some French when he  
fancies that nobody hears him,

In an aside to the valet-de-place—I never detect  
him—

Buys things for mother and me with a quite  
supernatural sweetness,

Tolerates all Fred’s airs, and is indispensably  
pleasant.

II.

Prattling on of these things, which I think  
cannot interest deeply,

So I hold back in my heart its dear and wonderful  
secret

(Which I must tell you at last, however I falter  
to tell you),

Fain to keep it all my own for a little while  
longer, —  
Doubting but it shall lose some part of its strange-  
ness and sweetness,  
Shared with another, and fearful that even *you*  
may not find it  
Just the marvel that I do—and thus turn our  
friendship to hatred.

Sometimes it seems to me that this love, which  
I feel is eternal,  
Must have begun with my life, and that only an  
absence was ended  
When we met and knew in our souls that we loved  
one another.  
For from the first was no doubt. The earliest  
hints of the passion,  
Whispered to girlhood's tremulous dream, may be  
mixed with misgiving,  
But, when the very love comes, it bears no vague-  
ness of meaning ;  
Touched by its truth (too fine to be felt by the  
ignorant senses,  
Knowing but looks and utterance) soul unto soul  
makes confession,  
Silence to silence speaks. And I think that this  
subtile assurance,

Yet unconfirmed from without, is even sweeter  
and dearer  
Than the perfected bliss that comes when the  
words have been spoken.  
— Not that I'd have them unsaid, now! But  
't was delicious to ponder  
All the miracle over, and clasp it, and keep it, and  
hide it, —  
While I beheld him, you know, with looks of  
indifferent languor,  
Talking of other things, and felt the divine  
contradiction  
Trouble my heart below!

And yet, if no doubt touched our  
passion,  
Do not believe for that, our love has been wholly  
unclouded.  
All best things are ours when pain and patience  
have won them :  
Peace itself would mean nothing but for the strife  
that preceded ;  
Triumph of love is greatest, when peril of love has  
been sorest.  
(That's to say, I dare say. I'm only repeating  
what *he* said.)

Well, then, of all wretched things in the world,  
a mystery, Clara,

Lurked in this life dear to mine, and hopelessly  
held us asunder

When we drew nearest together, and all but his  
speech said, "I love you."

Fred had known him at college, and then had  
found him at Naples,

After several years, — and called him a capital  
fellow.

Thus far his knowledge went, and beyond this  
began to run shallow

Over troubled ways, and to break into brilliant  
conjecture,

Harder by far to endure than the other's reticent  
absence —

Absence wherein at times he seemed to walk like  
one troubled

By an uneasy dream, whose spell is not broken  
with waking,

But it returns all day with a vivid and sudden  
recurrence,

Like a remembered event. Of the past that was  
closest the present,

This we knew from himself: He went at the  
earliest summons,

When the Rebellion began, and falling, terribly  
wounded,

Into the enemy's hands, after ages of sickness and  
prison,  
Made his escape at last ; and, returning, found all  
his virtues  
Grown out of recognition and shining in posthumous  
splendor, —  
Found all changed and estranged, and, he fancied,  
more wonder than welcome.  
So, somewhat heavy of heart, and disabled for war,  
he had wandered  
Hither to Europe for perfecter peace. Abruptly  
his silence,  
Full of suggestion and sadness, made here a chasm  
between us ;  
But we spanned the chasm with conversational  
bridges,  
Else talked all around it, and feigned an ignorance  
of it,  
With that absurd pretence which is always so  
painful, or comic,  
Just as you happen to make it or see it.

In spite of our fictions,  
Severed from his by that silence, my heart grew  
ever more anxious,  
Till last night when together we sat in Piazza San  
Marco

(Then, when the morrow must bring us parting —  
forever, it might be),  
Taking our ices al fresco. Some strolling minstrels  
were singing  
Airs from the *Trovatore*. I noted with painful  
observance,  
With the unwilling minuteness at such times  
absolute torture,  
All that brilliant scene, for which I cared nothing,  
before me :  
Dark-eyed Venetian leoni regarding the forestieri  
With those compassionate looks of gentle and  
curious wonder  
Home-keeping Italy's nations bend on the voyaging  
races, —  
Taciturn, indolent, sad, as their beautiful city  
itself is ;  
Groups of remotest English — not just the tra-  
ditional English  
(Lavish Milor is no more, and your travelling  
Briton is frugal) —  
English, though, after all, with the Channel always  
between them,  
Islanded in themselves, and the Continent's sociable  
races ;  
Country-people of ours — the New World's confi-  
dent children,  
Proud of America always, and even vain of the  
Troubles

As of disaster laid out on a scale unequalled in  
Europe ;  
Polyglot Russians that spoke all languages better  
than natives ;  
White-coated Austrian officers, anglicized Austrian  
dandies ;  
Gorgeous Levantine figures of Greek, and Turk,  
and Albanian —  
These, and the throngs that moved through the  
long arcades and Piazza,  
Shone on by numberless lamps that flamed round  
the perfect Piazza,  
Jewel-like set in the splendid frame of this beautiful picture,  
Full of such motley life, and so altogether  
Venetian.

Then we rose and walked where the lamps were  
blanched by the moonlight  
Flooding the Piazzetta with splendor, and throwing  
in shadow  
All the façade of Saint Mark's, with its pillars, and  
horses, and arches ;  
But the sculptured frondage, that blossoms over  
the arches  
Into the forms of saints, was touched with tenderest  
lucence,  
And the angel that stands on the crest of the vast  
campanile

Bathed his golden vans in the liquid light of the  
moonbeams.

Black rose the granite pillars that lift the Saint  
and the Lion ;

Black sank the island campanili from distance to  
distance ;

Over the charmed scene there brooded a presence  
of music,

Subtler than sound, and felt, unheard, in the depth  
of the spirit.

How can I gather and show you the airy threads  
of enchantment

Woven that night round my life and forever  
wrought into my being,

As in our boat we glided away from the glittering  
city ?

Dull at heart I felt, and I looked at the lights in  
the water,

Blurring their brilliance with tears, while the  
tresses of eddying seaweed,

Whirled in the ebbing tide, like the tresses of  
sea-maidens drifting

Seaward from palace-haunts, in the moonshine glis-  
tened and darkened.

Sad and vague were my thoughts, and full of  
fear was the silence ;



And, when he turned to speak at last, I trembled  
to hear him,  
Feeling he now must speak of his love, and his  
life and its secret,—  
Now that the narrowing chances had left but that  
cruel conclusion,  
Else the life-long ache of a love and a trouble  
unuttered.  
Better, my feebleness pleaded, the dreariest doubt  
that had vexed me,  
Than my life left nothing, not even a doubt to  
console it ;  
But, while I trembled and listened, his broken  
words crumbled to silence,  
And, as though some touch of fate had thrilled him  
with warning,  
Suddenly from me he turned. Our gondola slipped  
from the shadow  
Under a ship lying near, and glided into the moon-  
light,  
Where, in its brightest lustre, another gondola  
rested.  
I saw two lovers there, and he, in the face of the  
woman,  
Saw what has made him mine, my own beloved,  
forever !  
Mine ! — but through *what* tribulation, and awful  
confusion of spirit !

Tears that I think of with smiles, and sighs I  
remember with laughter,  
Agonies full of absurdity, keen, ridiculous anguish,  
Ending in depths of blissful shame, and heavenly  
transports !

## III.

White, and estranged as a man who has looked  
on a spectre, he mutely  
Sank to the place at my side, nor while we  
returned to the city  
Uttered a word of explaining, or comment, or  
comfort, but only,  
With his good-night, incoherently craved my for-  
giveness and patience,  
Parted, and left me to spend the night in hysterical  
vigils,  
Tending to Annie's supreme dismay, and post-  
poning our journey  
One day longer at least ; for I went to bed in the  
morning,  
Firmly rejecting the pity of friends, and the  
pleasures of travel,  
Fixed in a dreadful purpose never to get any  
better.

Later, however, I rallied, when Fred, with a  
maddening prologue

Touching the cause of my sickness, including his  
fever at Jaffa,  
Told me that some one was waiting ; and could he  
see me a moment ?  
See me ? Certainly not. Or, — yes. But why did  
he want to ?  
So, in the dishabille of a morning-gown and an  
arm-chair,  
Languid, with eloquent wanness of eye and of  
cheek, I received him —  
Willing to touch and reproach, and half-melted  
myself by my pathos,  
Which, with a reprobate joy, I wholly forgot the  
next instant,  
When, with electric words, few, swift, and vivid, he  
brought me,  
Through a brief tempest of tears, to this heaven of  
sunshine and sweetness.

Yes, he had looked on a ghost — the phantom  
of love that was perished ! —  
When, last night, he beheld the scene of which  
I have told you.  
For to the woman he saw there, his troth had been  
solemnly plighted  
Ere he went to the war. His return from the dead  
found her absent

In the belief of his death ; and hither to Europe he followed, —

Followed to seek her, and keep, if she would, the promise between them,

Or, were a haunting doubt confirmed, to break it and free her.

Then, at Naples we met, and the love that, before he was conscious,

Turned his life toward mine, laid torturing stress to the purpose

Whither it drove him forever, and whence forever it swerved him.

How could he tell me his love, with this terrible burden upon him ?

How could he linger near me, and still withhold the avowal ?

And what ruin were that, if the other were doubted unjustly,

And should prove fatally true ! With shame, he confessed he had faltered,

Clinging to guilty delays, and to hopes that were bitter with treason,

Up to the eve of our parting. And then the last anguish was spared him.

*Her* love for him was dead. But the heart that leaped in his bosom

With a great, dumb throb of joy and wonder and doubting,

Still must yield to the spell of his silencing will  
till that phantom  
Proved an actual ghost by common-place tests of  
the daylight,  
Such as speech with the lady's father.

And now, could I pardon —  
Nay, did I think I could love him? I sobbingly  
answered, I thought so.  
And we are all of us going to Lago di Como  
to-morrow,  
With an ulterior view at the first convenient  
Legation.

Patientest darling, good-by! Poor Fred, whose  
sense of what's proper  
Never was touched till now, is shocked at my glad  
self-betrayals,  
And I am pointed out as an awful example to  
Annie,  
Figuring all she must never be. But, oh, if *he*  
loves me! —

## POSTSCRIPT.

Since, he has shown me a letter in which he  
absolves and forgives her  
(Philip, of course, not Fred ; and the *other*, of  
course, and not Annie).  
Don't you think him generous, noble, unselfish,  
heroic ?

L'ENVOY. — *Clara's Comment.*

Well, I'm glad, I am sure, if Fanny supposes she's  
happy.  
I've no doubt her lover is good and noble — as  
men go.  
But, as regards his release of a woman who'd  
wholly forgot him,  
And whom he loved no longer, for one whom he  
loves, and who loves him,  
I don't exactly see where the *heroism* commences.

THE SONG THE ORIOLE SINGS.

THERE is a bird that comes and sings  
In the Professor's garden-trees ;  
Upon the English oak he swings,  
And tilts and tosses in the breeze.

I know his name, I know his note,  
That so with rapture takes my soul ;  
Like flame the gold beneath his throat,  
His glossy cope is black as coal.

O oriole, it is the song  
You sang me from the cottonwood,  
Too young to feel that I was young,  
Too glad to guess if life were good.

And while I hark, before my door,  
Adown the dusty Concord Road,  
The blue Miami flows once more  
As by the cottonwood it flowed.

And on the bank that rises steep,  
And pours a thousand tiny rills,  
From death and absence laugh and leap  
My school-mates to their flutter-mills.

The blackbirds jangle in the tops  
Of hoary-antlered sycamores ;  
The timorous killdee starts and stops  
Among the drift-wood on the shores.

Below, the bridge — a noonday fear  
Of dust and shadow shot with sun —  
Stretches its gloom from pier to pier,  
Far unto alien coasts unknown.

And on those alien coasts, above,  
Where silver ripples break the stream's  
Long blue, from some roof-sheltering grove  
A hidden parrot scolds and screams.

Ah, nothing, nothing ! Commonest things :  
A touch, a glimpse, a sound, a breath —  
It is a song the oriole sings —  
And all the rest belongs to death.

But oriole, my oriole,  
Were some bright seraph sent from bliss  
With songs of heaven to win my soul  
From simple memories such as this,

What could he tell to tempt my ear  
From you ? What high thing could there be,  
So tenderly and sweetly dear  
As my lost boyhood is to me ?



## PORDENONE.

## I.

**H**ARD by the Church of Saint Stephen, in sole  
and beautiful Venice,  
Under the colonnade of the Augustinian Convent,  
Every day, as I passed, I paused to look at the  
frescos  
Painted upon the ancient walls of the court of the  
Convent  
By a great master of old, who wore his sword and  
his dagger  
While he wrought the figures of patriarchs, martyrs,  
and virgins  
Into the sacred and famous scenes of Scriptural  
story.

## II.

Long ago the monks from their snug self-devotion  
were driven,  
Wistful and fat and slow: looking backward, I  
fancied them going  
Out through the sculptured doorway, and down the  
Ponte de' Frati,

Cowled and sandalled and beaded, a plump and  
pensive procession ;  
And in my day their cells were barracks for  
Austrian soldiers,  
Who in their turn have followed the Augustinian  
Friars.  
As to the frescos, little remained of work once so  
perfect.  
Summer and winter weather of some three cycles  
had wasted ;  
Plaster had fallen, and left unsightly blotches of  
ruin ;  
Wanton and stupid neglect had done its worst to  
the pictures :  
Yet to the sympathetic and reverent eye was  
apparent —  
Where the careless glance but found, in expanses  
of plaster,  
Touches of incoherent color and lines interrupted —  
Somewhat still of the life of surpassing splendor  
and glory  
Filling the frescos once ; and here and there was  
a figure,  
Standing apart, and out from the common decay  
and confusion,  
Flushed with immortal youth and ineffaceable  
beauty,  
Such as that figure of Eve in pathetic expulsion  
from Eden.

Taking—the tourist remembers—the wrath of  
Heaven al fresco,  
As is her well-known custom in thousands of acres  
of canvas.

## III.

I could make out the much-bepainted Biblical  
subjects,  
When I had patience enough : The Temptation,  
of course, and Expulsion ;  
Cain killing Abel, his Brother—the merest frag-  
ment of murder ;  
Noah's Debauch—the trunk of the sea-faring  
patriarch naked,  
And the garment, borne backward to cover it,  
fearfully tattered ;  
Abraham offering Isaac—no visible Isaac, and only  
Abraham's lifted knife held back by the hovering  
angel ;  
Martyrdom of Saint Stephen—a part of the figure  
of Stephen ;  
And the Conversion of Paul—the greaves on the  
leg of a soldier  
Held across the back of a prostrate horse by the  
stirrup ;  
But when I looked at the face of that tearful and  
beauteous figure,—

Eve in the fresco there, and, in Venice of old,  
Violante,  
As I must fain believe (the lovely daughter of  
Palma,  
Who was her father's Saint Barbara, and was the  
Bella of Titian), —  
Such a meaning and life shone forth from its  
animate presence  
As could restore those vague and ineffectual  
pictures,  
With their pristine colors, and fill them with light  
and with movement.  
Nay, sometimes it could blind me to all the present  
about me,  
Till I beheld no more the sausage-legged Austrian  
soldiers,  
Where they stood on guard beside one door of the  
Convent,  
Nor the sentinel beggars that watched the approach  
to the other ;  
Neither the bigolanti, the broad-backed Friulan  
maidens,  
Drawing the water with clatter and splashing, and  
laughter and gossip,  
Out of the carven well in the midst of the court of  
the Convent —  
No, not even the one with the mole on her cheek  
and the sidelong

Look, as she ambled forth with her buckets of  
bronze at her shoulder,  
Swinging upon the yoke to and fro, a-drip and  
a-glimmer.  
All in an instant was changed, and once more the  
cloister was peopled  
By the serene monks of old, and against walls of  
the cloisters,  
High on his scaffolding raised, Pordenone \* wrought  
at his frescos.  
Armed with dagger and sword, as the legend tells,  
against Titian,  
Who was his rival in art and in love.

## IV.

It seemed to be summer,  
In the forenoon of the day; and the master's  
diligent pencil  
Laid its last light touches on Eve driven forth out  
of Eden,  
Otherwise Violante, and while his pupils about him  
Wrought and chattered, in silence ran the thought  
of the painter :

\* Giovanni Antonio Licinio, called *Pordenone* from his birth-place in the Friuli, was a contemporary of Titian's, whom he equalled in many qualities, and was one of the most eminent Venetian painters in fresco.

"She, and forever she! Is it come to be my  
perdition?

Shall I, then, never more make the face of a  
beautiful woman

But it must take her divine, accursèd beauty  
upon it,

And, when I finish my work, stand forth her visible  
presence?

Ah! I could take this sword and strike it into her  
bosom!

Though I believe my own heart's blood would  
stream from the painting,

So much I love her! Yes, that look is marvellous  
like you,

Wandering, tender — such as I'd give my salvation  
to win you

Once to bend upon me! But I knew myself better  
than make you,

Lest I should play the fool about you here before  
people,

Helpless to turn away from your violet eyes,  
Violante,

That have turned all my life to a vision of mad-  
ness." The painter

Here unto speech betraying the thoughts he had  
silently pondered,

"Visions, visions, my son?" said a gray old friar  
who listened,

Seated there in the sun, with his eye on the work  
of the painter  
Fishily fixed, while the master blasphemed behind  
his mustaches.  
“Much have I envied your Art, who vouchsafeth  
to those who adore her  
Visions of heavenly splendor denied to fastings and  
vigils.  
I have spent days and nights of faint and painful  
devotion,  
Scourged myself almost to death, without one  
glimpse of the glory  
Which your touch has revealed in the face of that  
heavenly maiden.  
Pleasure me to repeat what it was you were saying  
of visions :  
Fain would I know how they come to you, though  
*I* never see them,  
And in my thickness of hearing I fear some words  
have escaped me.”  
Then, while the painter glared on the lifted face of  
the friar,  
Baleful, breathless, bewildered, fiercer than noon in  
the dog-days,  
Round the circle of pupils there ran a tittering  
murmur ;  
From the lips to the ears of those nameless Beppis  
and Gigis

Buzzed the stinging whisper : " Let's hear Pordenone's confession."

Well they knew the master's luckless love, and  
whose portrait

He had unconsciously painted there, and guessed  
that his visions

Scarcely were those conceived by the friar, who  
constantly blundered

Round the painter at work, mistaking every  
subject —

Noah's drunken Debauch for the Stoning of  
Stephen the Martyr,

And the Conversion of Paul for the Flight into  
Egypt ; forever

Putting his hand to his ear and shouting, " Speak  
louder, I pray you ! "

So they waited now, in silent, amused expectation,  
Till Pordenone's angry scorn should gather to  
bursting.

Long the painter gazed in furious silence, then  
slowly

Uttered a kind of moan, and turned again to his  
labor.

Tears gathered into his eyes, of mortification and  
pathos,

And when the dull old monk, who forgot, while he  
waited the answer,

Visions and painter, and all, had maundered away  
in his error,



Pordenone half envied the imbecile peace of his  
bosom ;

“For in my own,” he mused, “is such a combat of  
devils,

That I believe torpid age or stupid youth would be  
better

Than this manhood of mine that has climbed aloft  
to discover

Heights which I never can reach, and bright on the  
pinnacle standing

In the unfading light, my rival crowned victor  
above me.

If I could hint what I feel, what forever escapes  
from my pencil,

All after-time should know my will was not less  
than my failure,

Nor should any one dare remember me merely  
in pity.

All should read my sorrows and do my discomfiture  
homage,

Saying : ‘Not meanly at any time this painter  
meant or endeavored ;

His was the anguish of one who falls short of the  
highest achievement,

Conscious of doing his utmost, and knowing how  
vast his defeat is.

Life, if he would, might have had some second  
guerdon to give him,

But he would only the first; and behold! Let  
us honor  
Grief such as his must have been; no other sorrow  
can match it!  
There are certainly some things here that are nobly  
imagined:  
Look! here is masterly power in this play of light,  
and these shadows  
Boldly are massed; and what color! One can well  
understand Buonarotti  
Saying the sight of his Curtius was worth the  
whole journey from Florence.  
Here is a man at least never less than his work;  
you can feel it  
As you can feel in Titian's the painter's inferior  
spirit.  
He and this Pordenone, you know, were rivals;  
and Titian  
Knew how to paint to the popular humor, and  
spared not  
Foul means or fair (his way with rivals) to crush  
Pordenone,  
Who with an equal chance'—  
“Alas, if the whole world should tell me  
I was his equal in art, and the lie could save me  
from torment,  
So must I be lost, for my soul could never  
believe it!

Nay, let my envy snarl as fierce as it will at his  
glory,  
Still, when I look on his work, my soul makes  
obeisance within me,  
Humbling itself before the touch that shall never  
be equalled."

He who sleeps in continual noise is wakened by  
silence,  
And Pordenone was roused from these thoughts  
anon by the sudden  
Hush that had fallen upon the garrulous group of  
his pupils ;  
And ere he turned half-way with instinctive looks  
of inquiry,  
He was already warned, with a shock at the heart,  
of a presence  
Long attended, not feared ; and he laid one hand  
on his sword-hilt,  
Seizing the sheath with the other hand, that the  
pallet had dropped from.  
Then he fronted Titian, who stood with his arms  
lightly folded,  
And with a curious smile, half of sarcasm, half of  
compassion,  
Bent on th' embattled painter, cried : "Your slave,  
Messere Antonio !

What good friend has played this bitter jest with  
your humor?

As I beheld you just now full-armed with your  
pencil and palette,

I was half awed by your might; but these sorry  
trappings of bravo

Make me believe you less fit to be the rival of  
Titian,

Here in the peaceful calm of our well-ordered city  
of Venice,

Than to take service under some Spanish lordling  
at Naples,

Needy in blades for work that can not wait for the  
poison."

Pordenone flushed with anger and shame to be  
taken

At an unguarded point; but he answered with  
scornful defiance:

"Oh, you are come, I see, with the favorite weapon  
of Titian,

And you would make a battle of words. If you  
care for my counsel,

Listen to me: I say you are skilfuller far in my  
absence,

And your tongue can inflict a keener and deadlier  
mischief

When it is dipped in poisonous lies, and wielded in  
secret."

"Nay, then," Titian responded, "methinks that  
our friend Aretino \*

Makes a much better effect than either of us in  
that tongue-play.

But since Messer Robusti has measured our wit for  
his portrait,

Even *he* has grown shy of using his tongue than  
he once was.

Have you not heard the tale? Tintoretto was told  
Aretino

Meant to make him the subject of one of his merry  
effusions ;

And with his naked dirk he went carefully over his  
person,

Promising, if the poet made free with him in his  
verses,

He would immortalize my satirical friend with that  
pencil.

Doubtless the tale is not true. Aretino says  
nothing about it ;

Always speaks, in fact, with the highest respect of  
Robusti.

\* Pietro Aretino, the satirical poet, was a friend of Titian, whose house he frequented. The story of Tintoretto's measuring him for a portrait with his dagger is well known.

True or not, 't is well found." Then looking around  
on the frescos :

"Good, very good indeed ! Your breadth and  
richness and softness

No man living surpasses ; those heads are truly  
majestic.

Yes, Buonarotti was right, when he said that to  
look at your Curtius

Richly repaid him the trouble and cost of a journey  
from Florence.

Surely the world shall know you the first of  
painters in fresco !

Well ? You will not strike me unarmed ? This  
was hardly expected

By the good people that taught you to think our  
rivalry blood-red.

Let us be friends, Pordenone ! "

" Be patron and patronized, rather ;

Nay, if you spoke your whole mind out, be assassin  
and victim.

Could the life beat again in the broken heart of  
Giorgione,

He might tell us, I think, something pleasant of  
friendship with Titian."

Suddenly over the shoulder of Titian peered an  
ironical visage,

Smiling, malignly intent — the leer of the scurrilous  
poet :

“You know — all the world knows — who dug the  
grave of Giorgione.\*  
Titian and he were no friends — our Lady of  
Sorrows forgive 'em !  
But for all hurt that Titian did him he might have  
been living,  
Greater than any living, and lord of renown and  
such glory  
As would have left you both dull as yon withered  
moon in the sunshine.”  
Loud laughed the listening group at the insolent  
gibe of the poet,  
Stirring the gall to its depths in the bitter soul  
of their master,  
Who with his tremulous fingers tapped the hilt  
of his poniard,  
Answering naught as yet. Anon the glance of the  
ribald,  
Carelessly ranging from Pordenone's face to the  
picture,  
Dwelt with an absent light on its marvellous  
beauty, and kindled  
Into a slow recognition, with “Ha ! Violante !”  
Then, erring  
Wilfully as to the subject, he cackled his filthy  
derision :

\* Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli) was Titian's fellow-pupil and rival in the school of Bellini. He died at thirty-four, after a life of great triumphs and excesses.

“What have we here? More Magdalens yet of the  
painter’s acquaintance?

Ah — !”

The words had scarce left his lips, when  
the painter  
Rushed upon him, and clutching his throat, thrust  
him backward and held him  
Over the scaffolding’s edge in air, and straightway  
had flung him  
Crashing down on the pave of the cloister below,  
but for Titian,  
Who around painter and poet alike wound his  
strong arms and stayed them  
Solely, until the bewildered pupils could come to  
the rescue.  
Then, as the foes relaxed that embrace of frenzy  
and murder —  
White, one with rage and the other with terror,  
and either with hatred —  
Grimly the great master smiled : “You were much  
nearer paradise, Piero,  
Than you have been for some time. Be ruled now  
by me and get homeward  
Fast as you may, and be thankful.” And then, as  
the poet,  
Looking neither to right nor to left, amid the  
smiles of the pupils  
Tottered along the platform, and trembling de-  
scended the ladder



Down to the cloister pave, and, still without upward  
or backward

Glance, disappeared beneath the outer door of the  
Convent,

Titian turned again to the painter: "Farewell,  
Pordenone!

Learn more fairly to know me. I envy you not;  
and no rival

Now, or at any time, have I held you, or ever shall  
hold you.

Prosper and triumph still, for all me: you shall but  
do me honor,

Seeing that I too serve the art that your triumphs  
illustrate.

I for my part find life too short for work and for  
pleasure;

If it should touch a century's bound, I should think  
it too precious

Even to spare a moment for rage at another's good  
fortune.

Do not be fooled by the purblind flatterers who  
would persuade you

Either of us shall have greater fame through the  
fall of the other.

We can thrive only in common. The tardily  
blossoming cycles,

Flowering at last in this glorious age of our art,  
had not waited,

Folded calyces still, for Pordenone or Titian.  
Think you if we had not been, our pictures had  
    never been painted?  
Others had done them, or better, the same. We  
    are only  
Pencils God paints with. And think you that He  
    had wanted for pencils  
But for our being at hand? And yet — for some  
    virtue creative  
Dwells and divinely exists in the being of every  
    creature,  
So that the thing done through him is dear as if  
    he had done it —  
If I should see your power, a tint of this great  
    efflorescence,  
Fading, methinks I should feel myself beginning to  
    wither.  
They have abused your hate who told you that  
    Titian was jealous.  
Once, in my youth that is passed, I too had my  
    hates and my envies.  
'Sdeath! how it used to gall me — that power and  
    depth of Giorgione!  
I could have turned my knife in his heart when  
    I looked at his portraits.  
Ah! we learn somewhat still as the years go.  
    Now, when I see you

Doing this good work here, I am glad in my soul  
of its beauty.

Art is not ours, O friend ! but if we are not hers,  
we are nothing.

Look at the face you painted last year — or  
yesterday, even :

Far, so far, it seems from you, so utterly, finally,  
parted,

Nothing is stranger to you than this child of your  
soul ; and you wonder —

‘ Did I indeed then do it ? ’ No thrill of the  
rapture of doing

Stirs in your breast at the sight. Nay, then, not  
even the beauty

Which we had seemed to create is our own : the  
frame universal

Is as much ours. And shall I hate you because  
you are doing

That which when done you cannot feel yours more  
than I mine can feel it ?

It shall belong hereafter to all who perceive and  
enjoy it,

Rather than him who made it ; he, least of all,  
shall enjoy it.

They of the Church conjure us to look on death  
and be humble ;

I say, look upon life and keep your pride if you  
can, then :

See how to-day's achievement is only to-morrow's  
confusion ;

See how possession always cheapens the thing that  
was precious

To our endeavor ; how losses and gains are equally  
losses ;

How in ourselves we are nothing, and how we are  
anything only

As indifferent parts of the whole, that still, on our  
ceasing,

Whole remains as before, no less without us than  
with us.

Were it not for the delight of doing, the wonderful  
instant

Ere the thing done is done and dead, life scarce  
were worth living.

Ah, but that makes life divine ! We are gods, for  
that instant immortal,

Mortal for evermore, with a few days' rumor — or  
ages' —

What does it matter ? We, too, have our share of  
eating and drinking,

Love, and the liking of friends — mankind's common  
portion and pleasure.

Come, Pordenone, with me ; I would fain have you  
see my Assumption

While it is still unfinished, and stay with me for  
the evening :

You shall send home for your lute, and I'll ask  
Sansovino to supper.\*  
After what happened just now I scarcely could ask  
Aretino ;  
Though, for the matter of that, the dog is not one  
to bear malice.  
Will you not come ?”

## v.

I listen with Titian, and wait for the answer.  
But, whatever the answer that comes to Titian,  
I hear none.  
Nay, while I linger, all those presences fade into  
nothing,  
In the dead air of the past ; and the old Augustinian Convent  
Lapses to picturesque profanation again as a  
barrack ;  
Lapses and changes once more, and this time  
vanishes wholly,  
Leaving me at the end with the broken, shadowy  
legend,  
Broken and shadowy still, as in the beginning.  
I linger,

\* Sansovino, the architect, was a familiar guest at Titian's table, in his house near the *Fondamenta Nuove*.

Teased with its vague unfathomed suggestion, and  
wonder,  
As at first I wondered, what happened about  
Violante,  
And am but ill content with those metaphysical  
phrases  
Touching the strictly impersonal nature of personal  
effort,  
Wherewithal Titian had fain avoided the matter  
at issue.

THE LONG DAYS.

YES! they are here again, the long, long days,  
After the days of winter, pinched and white;  
Soon, with a thousand minstrels comes the light,  
Late, the sweet robin-haunted dusk delays.

But the long days that bring us back the flowers,  
The sunshine, and the quiet-dripping rain,  
And all the things we knew of spring again,  
The long days bring not the long-lost long hours.

The hours that now seem to have been each one  
A summer in itself, a whole life's bound,  
Filled full of deathless joy — where in his round,  
Have these forever faded from the sun?

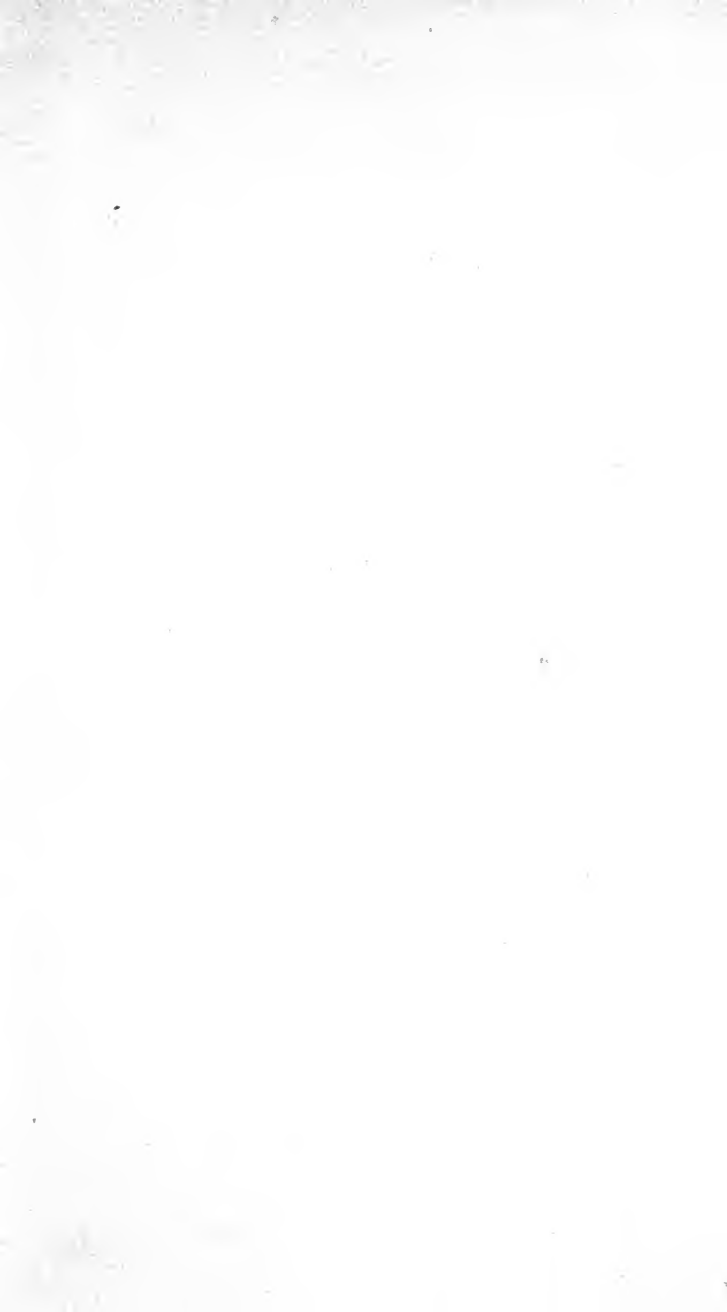
The fret, the fever, the unrest endures,  
But the time flies. . . . Oh, try, my little lad,  
Coming so hot and play-worn, to be glad  
And patient of the long hours that are yours!

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